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THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER.

VOL. I.

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THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER.

BY

ANNE BEALE,

AUTHOR OF

"FAY ARLINGTON," "THE PENNANT FAMILY,"
"SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION,"
&c., &c.

"O my love's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June:
O my love's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune.
As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in love am I:
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry."

BURNS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

MARK AND THE "SEA SERPENT."

ONE sultry, misty evening in June, a small vessel lay at anchor not far from the coast of one of the southern English counties. She was anxiously watched by a young man who was hurrying across the cliffs in her direction, telescope in hand. This was Mark Gay, son of the miller of Beachton. Having worked, against the grain, at the mill all day, he was in search of the occupation he loved. He was glad

to see the clouds and the mists gather as the tide came in, because his object was concealment, therefore he was quite happy when the last gleam of a lurid sun disappeared behind a thick mantle of sea-fog.

When he had traversed about a couple of miles of cliff and down, he descended by a rough path to the beach. As the tide was nearly up to the rocks that impeded its flow, he scrambled to a boulder, and leapt from stone to stone until he came to a well-concealed path in the rocks, that he evidently knew. It could scarcely be called a path, since it consisted of rough steps, hewn, seemingly by Nature, amongst the crags, and hidden from view by the garments of gorse, lichens, and parasitical plants thrown over and clinging about them. Mark was obliged to remove and replace these as he made his way through them with some difficulty. But he was strong, lithe, and used to danger,

so all obstacles seemed light to him, and only added zest to the attainment of his objects. He was of an adventurous spirit, and always ready to embark on any ocean that could lead him to new undertakings, whether it was rough or smooth. As he struggled on, the ocean before him began to wax angry, and the clouds above him to pour down their floods through heaven's open windows.

A dozen or so of these steps, however, brought him to a cave in the rocks, into which he crept through an opening concealed with brushwood.

"Hurrah, here you be, then, Measter Mark!" greeted him as he poked in his head.

The speaker was Levi Tuck, one of his father's men.

"Yes, here I am," cried Mark, standing up and shaking himself. "Is she likely to come in to-night?"

"Zure and zartain, Measter Mark," replied Levi.

The cavern was tolerably high, and so framed by nature's cunning hand as to give refuge to hapless fugitives. In past generations it had served for this end, when barbarous feuds and wars caused men's lives to be in jeopardy; but in Mark's day it was needed for no such friendly purpose. Indeed it was nearly forgotten, and if remembered at all, was merely mentioned as being somewhere or other amongst the rocks. There was an opening in front, wide enough to admit a view of the sea, and an indefinitely long passage at the back, dark and narrow enough for concealment. Mark glanced out of the casementless window at the vessel which had previously attracted his attention. She was riding at anchor within a safe distance from the cove which the cavern surmounted, while a fishing-boat

was moored beneath, containing two men, one of whom was Job Tuck, Levi's brother, a fisherman by trade. They were apparently waiting the hour and opportunity either for pushing off for a haul, or for returning to Beachton if the storm proved too overwhelming. The rocks jutted far out into the sea on either side of the little bay or creek that lay beneath the cave, and had been known to shelter small craft in times of danger. It would appear that the vessel in front was lying to with a view to putting in, in case of peril, and as Mark stood watching her keenly and anxiously, he might have been considering her chances of safety as the wind and sea rose high.

By degrees, however, "darkness crept over the face of the deep," and he could discern her no longer.

"Now be the time; the tide be at vull," whispered Levi.

Almost as he spoke Mark descried the vessel dimly, surmounting a huge wave, and riding gallantly into the little harbour. A shout from below was taken up above, and Levi Tuck kindled a light in the dark cavern. Mark grew excited, walked to and fro, and talked loudly.

"Bide you here a while, Measter Mark," said Levi. But Mark was not the man to "bide" anywhere while there was daring work to do; so he followed Levi out of the cave to the dangerous path of steps. There was light enough to enable them to grope their way down, now clinging to a bramble, anon to a bracken. More than once Mark was in peril of slipping, from his insecure footing, and being thrown down the cliff into the sea; but he reached the last step finally, and leapt from it into the boat. The vessel had waited for time and tide, and had come in at the right moment, under

cover of the darkness. The threatening storm lulled, and the sullen waves fell, while a sudden gleam of dying sunlight pierced the clouds, and revealed a strange, wild scene.

The boat was alongside the vessel, and her two sailors were receiving and stowing away packages hurled at them by the numerous crew of the larger craft. Lanterns and torches gleamed and flitted about the deck, in the fitful light of which the faces of the men looked almost demoniacal. Those belonging to the vessel were principally foreigners, and their scarlet head-gear and many-coloured vests showed out curiously from time to time in the uncertain summer twilight. The sea was comparatively calm in the small cove, and enabled the men to do their nefarious work. This they did amid a storm of oaths which were uttered in a jargon of the English, Dutch,

and French languages. These oaths redoubled as some of the packages were hauled, with difficulty and by torchlight, up the steps to the cave, and but for Mark's resolution his friends, the Tucks, would have given in. Having been a voyage or two in the vessel, the *Sea Serpent* by name, he knew both her and her captain, and took a wild delight in showing how little he cared for danger. One moment he was in the boat, the next on the deck of the vessel; now helping the cargo up the steps, anon hiding it in the depths of the cave. He was aware that at that time his father and his sister Jerusha were expecting him and Levi to join in family prayer; and he knew that they must frame excuses to account for their absence; but he had embarked with the captain of the *Sea Serpent* in smuggling practices, and he did not mean to relinquish them. On the contrary, his conscience

being elastic, he chose to think it lawful to circumvent the Government, and forestall free trade. His first step into the reckless ways of dissimulation was taken when, contrary to his father's desire, he left the work God gave him to do, and went to sea. He there imbibed the principles of the trade in which he had since, unfortunately, embarked.

Experience proved that the excessive nature of the tariffs on goods, both in England and France, even far into the present century, caused daring people to risk everything in order to smuggle prohibited articles into those countries. The cost of preventing it in England was enormous. The Preventive Service and the Coast Blockade were organised for this purpose, but so long as a profit was to be made commensurate with the risk, the smugglers continued to brave these forces. The Admiralty and

Board of Trade failed to exterminate them, as did fines, imprisonment, or service in the Royal Navy, to deter them from their illicit traffic. The reduction of the duties on silks, tea, and other articles, has done more to repress it than all the revenue officers put together; but these had not been curtailed at the period when the *Sea Serpent* dashed into Hollow Cove; and the country folks still took pleasure in aiding the smuggler to bring in and dispose of his goods.

Thus it was that the Tucks, and similar simple people, had their wits occasionally sharpened, and the safety of their persons endangered, by helping to land and stow away tempting spirits, as well as silks and laces, and now and again to lose their wits by drinking the one, or their lives in defending the other. And thus it was that Mark began a career, the end of which he

could not foresee or imagine, and that he remained to help his very doubtful friends and acquaintances, until the vessel was unloaded, and the cargo to all appearance safe.

A portion of the latter lay in the boat, concealed beneath nets, fishing-tackle, oars, and the like, and was confided to the care of Job Tuck and two other Beachton fishermen, while the rest was hidden in the cave, under the supervision of Mark, Levi, and a man named Chivers, whose home was not far from the cove.

The captain of the *Sea Serpent* was an Englishman named Dangerfield. He exercised considerable power over Mark, who, though daring enough, had his weak points. They spoke to one another from time to time when they encountered, and the captain paused in his oaths and his orders to make inquiries of moment to both.

"Are we suspected? Is the *Sea Serpent* safe?" he asked.

"I hear nothing to the contrary. She is reckoned honest," replied Mark.

"Honest!—I should think so," thundered the captain. "She only carries cheap goods to those who can't afford dear ones. When are you coming another voyage?"

"As soon as father will let me. He keeps me tight at milling, and I'm obliged to be as meek as a lamb."

"Haw, haw; we're jolly lambs, all of us Southdowners! When shall we come to a settlement? Will you meet me at Sandport this night fortnight?"

"Yes. And will you pay us a visit? Father has often asked you."

"Another lamb to your fold. Yes, I'll spend a Sunday with you. Go to church and look proper in your sister's eyes."

The captain laughed, but Mark did not

join. He had forgotten Jerusha, and did not care that she should become acquainted with his friend. The two men were a great contrast, as they stood, side by side, on deck —Dangerfield broad, heavy, and dark; Gay slight and fair; the one a somewhat evil-looking man of near forty, the other with a face naturally frank, of five-and-twenty; the one resolute and strong, the other daring and undecided; the one born to command the undisciplined mind, the other to obey, where obedience sided with inclination. Mark was, unfortunately, an only son, and had been much indulged, so that he generally allowed himself to be guided rather by his will than his conscience. Dangerfield was a mere speculator and smuggler, and had no conscience at all—at least, not perceptibly, for he stuck at nothing to gain his ends.

"This night fortnight, then, at the 'Jolly

Tars,' at Sandport," were the Captain's parting words, as he shook Mark's hand, when that young man was prepared to leave the vessel.

"All right!" cried Mark, and leaped into the boat, which was nearly overturned by his impetuosity.

The work was completed before the tide had ebbed too far to prevent both ship and boat from putting off to sea again. They did so, in spite of the increasing storm, and the *Sea Serpent* rode off as gaily as if she were immaculate, while the boat took to coasting around the shore in the direction of Sandport, the largest seaport town of the district.

Mark and his men remained awhile in the cave to conceal the packages effectually, as well as to sample a particular bottle of French brandy, recommended to them by the Captain. Headstrong yet weak, Mark

resisted a certain warning voice within, and drank a little more than his young head could bear; so that when he, Levi, and Chivers began their perilous descent from the cave, he felt giddy, and kept his equilibrium with difficulty. The men helped him, however, and they succeeded in reaching the beach, having carefully replaced the now black garb of the rocky path. Their lanterns glimmered fitfully as they scrambled along, for the night was too cloudy to allow them to proceed without them. Mark soon regained his natural powers, and the trio proceeded between the rocks and the ebbing tide until they reached a rough road, which led between the rocks and downs to a few fishermen's huts, one of which Chivers inhabited.

"See to the goods," said Mark. "We shall get them off by degrees, now the tide is at full. Plenty of men ready to take them, and lots of purchasers."

"Ay, Measter Mark," returned Chivers; "but 'tis risky work, all the same."

"No risks, no winnings. Good night, Chivers," said Mark. And he and Levi took the cliff road, while Chivers went to his home.

CHAPTER II.

JERUSHA AND THE PEDLAR.

BEACHTON MILL was a picturesque dwelling, at the foot of a range of hills, and not far from the sea. The stream that turned the great mill-wheel flowed down from the hills, and having done its work in helping to grind the corn grown in its vicinity, wandered peaceably on until it fell into the sea at the fishing village of Beachton. Just above the mill this stream divided into two branches, so that it not only supplied the wheel at the back, but fed the flocks, and watered the pastures in the

front. The back of the house was protected by a green slope from the sea, whilst its frontage faced the hills, downs, and fields amongst which it nestled.

Here, beneath the stone porch, stood, on the evening after Mark's visit to the cave, his sister Jerusha. She was shading her eyes with her hand from the sun, and apparently surveying the fair scene before her. She was young, and sufficiently good-looking to be called by the neighbours, "our Beachton beauty." Not that she was remarkably beautiful; but the farm people, the miller's men, and the fishermen had known her from her childhood, and believed there was not such another girl between them and London. She was a brunette, of middle height, easy figure, and laughter-loving countenance. Her sparkling dark eyes and dimpled mouth seemed more akin to mirth than gravity, though she could be

grave upon occasion. Indeed, her face was serious as she stood beneath the porch, and said, half aloud, "I wish he would come home. He was so late again last night."

The roses that covered the porch almost touched her smooth hair; whilst a pleasant perfume floated about her from the pinks, wall-flowers, and lavender of her trim old-fashioned garden. She looked, indeed, like a picture set in an ornamental frame; for not only was the porch covered with trailing flowers, but the house was adorned by a vine, and the low wall that enclosed it by ivy.

She had scarcely uttered the words quoted when a pony dashed up to the wicket, and thrust his head over it. She advanced to meet him, and he instantly thrust head and neck over the low wall that enclosed her garden.

"What business have you here, Dandy?

What will Miss Martha say?" she asked, stroking his face. "Carrots, is it? You naughty vagabond! You born beggar! What next, I wonder?"

The pony nodded impatiently, and tossed his mane. She went into the house, and returned with a plate of carrots and apples in slices, which Dandy munched daintily, bit by bit, as she presented them.

While they were thus engaged, a man, with a pack on his back, stood on the rustic bridge that crossed the stream at the bottom of the hilly slope, and looked at them. He then ascended the hill slowly, glancing from side to side as he walked, until he drew near the mill. The pony, conscious of a stranger's approach, pricked his ears, made a naughty fling, and trotted to a distance.

"I have got some beautiful silks, miss, if you'll condescend to look at 'em. Dirt cheap. Bought 'em a bargain of a tradesman who un-

fortunately failed," said the pedlar, laying down his pack, and beginning to open it.

"Pray come inside," said Jerusha, dazzled by the splendid colours unfolded to her view.

She led the way through a passage into a room on the right, which served the purposes of best kitchen and hall. It looked out at the back, and hence could be seen all the carts and people that came on business to the mill. The great wheel itself was visible from the latticed window, and when it was at rest the sound of the sea came in, so that, as Jerusha said, "There was never a moment's quiet in that room." It contained, as principal furniture, a large deal table, grown blossom-white by constant scrubbing, on which the pedlar laid his pack; a handsome mahogany bureau, at which he looked as if envious of the bank-notes therein; an eight-day clock, with Time wielding his

scythe above the immemorial words, "*Tempus fugit;*" and a large oaken dresser furnished with a stock of crockery-ware large enough to fill a moderate shop. Round about the bureau hung files of bills; scripture prints, in handsome frames, adorned the walls, and on the high chimney-piece, in front of the chimney-corner, stood brazen candlesticks, polished to look like gold. In these matters Jerusha took a commendable interest, as well as in all connected with the household of which she was mistress. Indeed, she threw her heart into everything she did.

As she was one who could never enjoy being alone, she ran into the passage, and called in a high clear voice,

"Tilly! Tilly! come here directly!"

Her summons was answered by a young woman in striped blue gown and apron, and large white cap, who stood a moment in the door-way, awestruck, exclaiming,

"Laws, Miss Rushy, there be a zight!"

Tilly was, however, soon at her young mistress's side. She took care to cover her red arms and hands with her apron, lest she should be tempted to touch; but responded to each inquiry as to which silk or ribbon she preferred, by the words "Thick 'un, and thick 'un,"—proving that she had no choice when all was so grand.

"But which do you like best?" asked Jerusha, imperatively.

"It bean't vor the likes o' I to determine," was the reply, in a voice as stolid as her face.

Although Tilly was endowed with a face round as a plum-pudding and red as a russet apple, as well as with strong sturdy limbs, she was of a desponding turn of mind, and usually saw the dark side of things, which was particularly aggravating to Rushy, to whom life was rose-colour.

While the pedlar continued to recommend the silks, Tilly fixed her round blue eyes upon him, and, as she afterwards expressed it, "took agin 'un, because he never looked oone in the feace."

"Only one pound, miss. You wouldn't get it for three at Sandport. The greatest bargain ever offered," urged the pedlar. "Say nineteen and sixpence, for the sake of your pretty face. Couldn't take less, upon my word and honour."

"Then my face is only worth sixpence," laughed Rushy, surveying the fawn-coloured silk with a delicate pink stripe that her soul hankered after.

"Measter medn't like he," whispered Tilly into Rushy's ear, quite unconscious that whispering in company is ungenteel and invidious.

The pedlar eyed her ominously, but sought to attract her attention by a bright

scarlet ribbon, which he assured her was made on purpose for her complexion, and which he could offer dirt cheap.

"Too grand vor the likes o' I," she said, gazing stolidly on the ribbon.

While Jerusha was still undecided, Mark came in; she turned towards him with animated delight, and did not perceive the significant glance he gave the pedlar.

"I am so glad you are come, brother," she said; "just in time too; which of these lovely silks is prettiest?"

His choice fell instantly on one of gaudy pattern and bright colour. He was never given to much consideration, and what pleased him most at first sight was usually best. Rushy's countenance fell.

"That is very dear, and I cannot afford more than a pound. Besides, I don't like red in a gown," she said.

"Think them over a bit, my pretty miss,

while I show the young master some waistcoat pieces and handkerchiefs," said the pedlar, winking at Mark.

But Rushy had made up her mind, and was about to leave the room in search of a one-pound note, at that time in circulation, when her father entered the passage. He had been to Sandport on business, and, expecting to find his supper laid, was surprised to see the table covered with silks. But Rushy welcomed him gaily, and asked him to come in quickly and choose her a silk gown.

Mr. Martin Gay was a portly man of middle age, as broad-shouldered and wide-chested as any of the millers on record, yet different from most of them in many respects. His eyes were dark, and like his daughter's, but his face was rather serious than mirthful, and if it had ever been furnished with dimples, Time's scythe had

mown them down. Still there was a twinkle in his eye, indicative of latent merriment; not that he showed it on the present occasion, for he looked severely at the pedlar, who nevertheless began to recommend his goods.

"Only nineteen and sixpence, and worth three pound, you say, Rushy?" said Martin Gay. "That's too good a bargain to be honest. If I was to sell a sack o' flour at less than half price I should say 'twas a come-by-chance. Couldn't do it, my lass, and let our young queen have her dues. She's as young as you, Rushy. Thee 'ouldn't take from her revenues, eh, maid?"

"Oh no, father," cried Rushy, alarmed.

"Then, sir, we won't trouble you to stay any longer," said the miller to the pedlar. "To buy cheap and sell dear, is bad enough, but I misdoubt them as undersells everybody else just as much. Couldn't stand it

myself, and our respectable tradesmen at Sandport couldn't stand it, and pay the taxes. You see, sir, I'm for 'rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' so if you've no objection, we won't have any dealings on the present occasion."

Before the miller had completed this speech Mark Gay had left the room. To Rushy's surprise the pedlar gathered up his silks without remonstrance, muttered "As you like, master," and hurried off.

"Smuggled, my girl! Let's keep 'clean hands and a pure heart' as long as we can," said the miller to his daughter.

As soon as the pedlar was out of sight of the mill he was joined by Mark.

"Let's try Miss Martha. She's sure to buy," said Mark, and they walked rapidly to a house which stood on an eminence at no great distance.

Miss Martha Hasluck, the lady alluded to,

was standing in the porch of the said house, shouting lustily, at the top of her voice, the words,

"Dandy, you villain, where are you off to? To Rushy, I'll be bound!" and while Mark and the pedlar hurry towards her, we must describe her and her abode.

The latter was called Beachton Villa, and was a low-roofed, broad-faced, trellis-covered dwelling of some pretension. Although more modern than the gabled mill, it was, in its way, scarcely less picturesque. Roses and various trailing plants crept over the front and porch to the thatched roof, and peeped in at the sashed windows. Its surroundings both of land and sea were very lovely. It was flanked on the right and protected at the back by hills, while on the left a musical brook babbled between ferny banks, and separated its smooth lawn from a large kitchen garden and an old

farm-house, once the family residence, now —poor old hack—degraded by the casualty of long living to a carter's dwelling. But if the villa was gay with the advantages of youth, the farm was sober in the richness of years. Its roof was warmed with many-hued mosses and lichens, its grey walls mellowed by the soft brush of Time. Still the youthful villa might be said to look down upon the ancient farm, as arrogant young people will occasionally do upon humble age. The former stood on a slight eminence, the latter on the flat below, and both glanced up the green slope towards the mill, as if wishful, but unable to see it. Beyond and below them lay the fishing village of Beachton, whilst the mighty sea terminated, as it not unfrequently does, the scene.

There was animation everywhere, for the farm folk and servants were always astir;

the geese seemed never to cease gabbling in the mill-stream that ran into the tiny bay; the "cattle on a thousand hills" wandered, lowed, and bleated continually; and, before all, Miss Martha's voice sounded high, clear, and commanding from morning till night.

Miss Martha was the sort of lady you expected from her voice. She was well-nigh tall and large enough to fill her porch, and she boasted that no one could usurp it while she was in it. Her face was round, large, and rosy with health, resolution, and sometimes good temper—always good-humour, since temper and humour are by no means synonymous. Large caps were the mode at that period of history, so her crop of brown curls was surmounted by a many-winged fabric of lace, muslin, and ribbon that Mercury might have envied. There was nothing either peculiar or eccentric in

Miss Martha's dress, beyond a very large apron with voluminous pockets, which contained all the keys of the establishment, from the brass instrument that turned the cider-barrel to the small key of her large desk. Although teetotalism had not become a power in the land in her day, she was scrupulous in the matter of drink, and a drunken ploughman or retainer of any kind was sure of summary dismissal. And it was remarkable that she had rarely to dismiss a servant—for her people knew that if she was loud-tongued she was warm-hearted, and would see to them in sickness if they served her well in health. Besides, she knew by name every child and dog in the vicinity, and woe to those who maltreated either.

Miss Martha continued to stand in her porch until the vagrant Dandy appeared trotting through the open gate, and up the

gravel drive. Although conscious of wrong-doing, he stood before Miss Martha, impudently nodding his head.

"There's no keeping anything from that pert minx Rushy!" she exclaimed. "All the men are after her, and one can't keep one's live stock at home. Do you suppose, Dandy, that I'm to be your porter whenever you choose to go out gallivanting? There, get away with you, and don't look for carrots from me."

Dandy withdrew with a fling to his dining-room on the lawn, and Miss Martha went to shut the gate. Here she was accosted by Mark Gay.

"Such bargains, Miss Martha!" he exclaimed; "silks, satins, and ribbons for a song. A pedlar—I said you would be sure to buy—shall I have him up? He's off to Sandport, and can't wait."

"From over the water, without a doubt,"

cried Miss Martha, at her loudest pitch. "French silks, I'll be bound."

"Everybody will hear you, Miss Martha," whispered Mark. "They'll take him for a smuggler."

"What's the odds? I've no secrets. What I buy I'll stand to, whether silks or beasts. I'm for free trade, and no monopoly. Tell your man to go round by the back, and I'll have a look. I daresay Janey won't object to it either, for she says it's uncommon dull. Mind you, Mark, you're not to be fiddle-faddling and sweethearting Janey, for you're not suited. A jolly miller and a boarding-school miss—twiddling the pianor and fandangoing with her feet, and tapestrying with her hands—are about as fit for one another as—why—as Dandy and Judy, the old cart-mare! I'm sending Janey off, for she's no good, as I see, to man or beast."

There was nothing Miss Martha loved like a bargain, so when she found Mark and the pedlar at the back door, she beckoned them into her dining parlour. The pack was laid on a strong mahogany table, and soon opened, while she went shouting into the passage,

"Janey, Janey, where on earth are you? Never forthcoming when you're wanted."

A fair, slim, delicate-looking girl appeared, who coloured when she saw Mark. Her hair fell in long ringlets over her back and face, for what was called a "crop" was then all the fashion, and Miss Janey was, as her aunt expressed it, "as vain of her curls as a mermaid."

"French goods!" cried Miss Martha, as the pedlar unfolded his silks. "Humph! how did you get 'em? Spirits, too, I daresay, French brandy and good Hollands, if we wanted such things. One pound ten for

a smuggled gown! Shouldn't think of it. Don't be afraid, man, I'm for free trade, and think the excise dues iniquitous. Take a pride in evading 'em. Not afraid to say so either."

"Not so loud, if you please, miss—," urged the pedlar.

"All friends here. Everything above-board. I always say what I mean. I'll give you one pound for this piece, and fifteen shillings for that," said Miss Martha, at the top of her voice.

"Cost me more, miss. I assure you the goods are honestly come by. A tradesman that failed, and——"

"Fiddlesticks! I know all about it, and you'd better take my bid, or the coast-guard will have it. Now, Janey, you mustn't listen to Mark. He's no more taste than an oyster. A pale-faced, mealy-mouthed child

like you in that silk, all the colours o' yonder sea. This or nothing."

"Bright colours become me, aunt, everybody says so," cried Janey, tossing her ringlets.

"Once more let me beg you won't call me *ornt*," said Miss Martha, authoritatively, who was always taking exception to Janey's vowels.

"That's how Miss Softwhistle pronounced it, wasn't it, Janey? The genteel touch, Miss Martha," laughed Mark, heightening Janey's delicate flush, who drew herself up, and looked offended, while the pedlar made another appeal.

It ended, as bargain-striking usually does, by half measures, and the two pieces of silk on which Miss Martha, with more than womanly decision, had fixed her mind, were secured by her at one pound eighteen

shillings and ninepence, and a ribbon was thrown into the bargain.

The pedlar took his leave as soon as he was paid, and hurried up the back walk that led through trees to the hilly road, which communicated between Beachton and the village of Woolleysheepfold, and thence to Sandport.

When he was gone Miss Martha's conscience pricked her.

"Now, Mark, don't you have anything to do with smuggled goods. It's all very well for an old woman like me. Nobody 'ould dare to call me over the coals. But your father sets his face against the traffic. Mustn't disobey him, Mark, my boy. Remember the fifth commandment."

"Practise what you preach, Miss Martha," returned Mark gaily. "I say it's a shame to lay such heavy duties on foreign goods.

Good night. Good-bye, Janey; mind your vowels."

In another minute Mark was running up the hill in pursuit of the pedlar.

CHAPTER III.

ALWAYS TOO LATE.

"TOO late for family worship again, my son," was the miller's greeting when Mark returned to the mill. "Is it Miss Martha or curly-headed Janey this time? The ladies are at the bottom of most things."

"Both, father; I can't choose between them," replied Mark. "One is all sound, the other silence."

"Miss Martha's the greatest catch," said the miller, smiling. "But I wish you would come back for prayer-time. No

prosperity for them as neglects that. Your blessed mother never kept me back from worship, but always gave me a hint to be gone when father was setting out this very Bible, on this very table. She knew the time to a minute."

Martin Gay laid his hand on the Book, from which he had just read a chapter to his daughter, Tilly, and his men, and looked up anxiously at Mark, who averted his eyes, and stooped to fondle a large white sheep-dog that had poked his nose into his hand. Father and son were as great a contrast as Mark and Dangerfield. The one burly and broad, with a fine, shrewd, sensible, concentrated face; the other with roving eyes and a roving nature.

"Well, God bless thee, my boy; be sure to say your prayers, as you weren't here for worship, and be in time for the future," continued Martin Gay, rising to go to bed,

and putting his hand fondly on his son's shoulder.

Jerusha was ready with his candle-stick, shining like silver, which she always brought herself. When she had given it to him, together with her good-night kiss, and received in return the parting benediction she expected, she seated herself in the chair he had vacated.

"Now, Mark, let us have a chat," she said.

"Not a lecture, Rushy," replied her brother, sitting down opposite her. "I won't be lectured."

"I am not going to lecture. But nothing troubles father so much as your not being in for prayers," she returned. "We can't expect others to come if you don't, and you know father likes a large congregation."

"So do all preachers, whether parsons or methodies," said Mark, lightly. "The

bigger the crowd the louder they holloa."

"That isn't father's way," said Rushy, offended. "The more earnest he feels the quieter he grows. And the more hurt his heart is the less he says."

"Lecture the first," exclaimed Mark, his eyes on the door. "Do you know, Miss Martha bought the silk you coveted, and I think it was for Janey."

"Well, I didn't want it," she sighed. "Do you think the silks were really smuggled?"

"What if they were? It is only offering foreign goods at a fair price. That pedlar makes an honest living by buying on this side the water what sailors bring from the other. They don't steal it; they only buy cheap and sell cheap, and introduce into one country the manufactures of another. There's French brandy and Dutch hollands——"

"We're better without them," interrupted

Rushy. "I hope you don't know any smugglers, Mark?"

She looked up quickly, and fixed her eyes on Mark; but it was vain to try to catch his. Those wandering fires were apparently studying the pictures hanging opposite.

"I hope you don't know any robbers of orchards, or poachers of rabbits," he returned. "And you mustn't make acquaintance with the ladies from foreign parts, for they are the worst of smugglers. One, bigger than Miss Martha, landed in England the other day, and being suspected, was requested to undress. She was swathed in lace, and when her swaddling clothes were removed she was as slim as Janey. Ha, ha, Rushy, the women beat the men!"

"More's the pity; we should set them a better example. How do Miss Martha and Janey get on?"

"I didn't ask 'em."

"You're not really thinking of Janey, brother?"

"Not at this moment. You're not really thinking of cousin Solomon, sister, who thinks of you?"

Rushy replied with a hearty laugh, and her bright face and white teeth so inspired Mark that he jumped up and gave her a brotherly hug.

"If Miss Martha makes Janey her heiress, then I shall be thinking of her from morning to night; and if she makes solemn Solomon her heir, then I know where your thoughts will be," he said, standing against the chimney-corner, and surveying his sister.

"Indeed they will not. I wouldn't have Solomon Hasluck if he had Squire Worthington's wealth, and were a magistrate, and as clever as the rector. And I do like clever people," retorted Rushy.

"But Solomon's a preacher," said Mark, emphasising the last word. "A holy man, Rushy, think of that! A sort of church-methodist."

"I daresay he is very good," replied Rushy, changing her tone. "And I like good people too. But there's old Thomas Fudgit pointing at half-past ten," she added, looking at the clock, which she had so called from childhood. "Time goes so fast! Even these long days are not long enough for all one has to do."

"Fast!" echoed Mark. "Why, it drags in this slow place. Thomas Fudgit and the mill-wheel go together. Always the same dull time—click, click; tick, tick; tick, tick; click, click. It drives one out of one's senses!"

"If one had any," said Rushy, sagely. "If I have any, they compose and sober

mine. Old Thomas seems to me a second father, and the wheel a sort of music-master. It changes time and tune, according to my spirits. If they are high it sings a harvest song; if they are low, it laments like 'Auld Robin Gray.'"

"The noise makes me as deaf as a post, Rushy."

"Oh, Mark! father says he gets deaf as a post when he's out of hearing of the mill. I wonder why people are made so different; though, to be sure, it would be dull if we were all alike."

"You'll find me drowned in the mill pond, or cogging the wheel one of these days, if I stop here," said Mark, half savagely, half reflectively.

"Don't talk so wildly, brother. Suppose God were to take you at your word, and let you fall in by accident even. Do you think

you are prepared to meet Him in the spirit? It seems to me that life is short enough already, and I tremble when I remember that father is getting old. Not that age has much to do with it, for only last week pretty Letty Sharland was laid in the ground, and she only seventeen; younger than you or I. It may be our turn next. But then, what would father do?"

"You are too wise, Rushy," said Mark, uneasily. "I'll buy you a wig and gown when I make my next voyage. You were born for a judge. If I go to the Cape next turn you shall come along, and then you can preach to the niggers. I'll find you a live missionary for a husband, and a hundred or so of young blacks to teach."

"I should like that, Mark. But I hope to stay with father all our lives. You don't mean that you are thinking of the sea again, now that he has almost made up his mind

to take you into partnership. That would be too bad after all your promises. And father so patient and good."

"Can't say, Rushy. One's thoughts are one's own. 'What's out, is all about,' you know. Good night. Dream of Solomon, and I'll dream of Jancy. If Jancy were only as pretty as you, I think I might settle down. But she's milk-and-water, and I like something more spirity."

Saying which, Mark kissed Rushy and went to bed.

She followed him up-stairs, and retired to her tidy little chamber. It was a sultry night, and she looked out of the open window, whence she could catch sight of the distant ocean, above the intervening rising ground. She sighed as she thought of her brother's yearning for the dangerous element, and wished he loved the clear stream that flowed beneath her lattice as well. Both

shone, sparkled, and danced in the moonlight—the one, emblem of the great, uncertain world he longed for; the other of the narrow, peaceful home she delighted in.

"And we might be so happy!" she sighed. "But if I fail to keep my temper, how can I expect him to bridle his wishes? I wonder where temper comes from, and where wishes come from—the heart, or the head, or the soul?"

With which philosophical problem on her mind Rushy knelt down and asked for enlightenment and guidance of Him who alone can safely light and lead the pilgrim of earth on his doubtful way.

The following morning Mark did not appear at breakfast, and Jerusha went into the back kitchen to make inquiries concerning him of Levi Tuck, who was finishing his breakfast in the chimney-corner, while Tilly,

mounted on pattens, was mopping up the water she had thrown over the floor.

"Have you seen Mark, Levi Tuck?" asked Jerusha.

"Ees, miss; I zee un go vor a dip. He's vonder o' the zea nor I. If you be drowned in, well an' good; but vor to go an' wash yourzelf all auver ov your awn accord, 'tis a temptin' o' Providence. Bad enough vor to be zwilled wi' vresh water by the loikes o' Tilly, but worse vor to tumble 'ead auver 'eels into the zea of your own intent."

Levi looked so stolid that no one would have thought him capable of sufficient cunning to be in league with the smugglers, or to frame an excuse for absent Mark. But lies breed lies. He was a powerful man, and could, as the miller was wont to say, "do a good day's work, though he was all sinews and no brains." When he rose, having finished his breakfast, he gave himself a shake,

preparatory to work, and was sharply reprimanded by Tilly, who, nevertheless, was supposed to have a particular liking for him.

"Lawks-a-massy, Levi! zee what theer't a-doing!" she cried, as a quarter of a peck of flour fell from his smock-frock upon her floor, so lately washed.

He escaped, however, from the mop which she levelled at him, and hastened to join his comrades in the mill. The miller was there before him, so there was no dawdling over meals or work till mid-day at least. Carts were already waiting with grist; horses and donkeys came for bags of flour; men and women appeared and disappeared, bearing the meal to make their staff of life; and so the mill-wheel turned busily till evening came round again.

"See how hard he works! Don't let's be beaten by wood and water," the miller

would urge, pointing to the wheel, which was a living creature to him.

Mark came in to breakfast soon after the miller left the table. He was just finishing when Janey appeared, her ringlets in disorder, her pale face flushed.

"Aunt has sent to ask if Mr. Gay can spare any men to help in the hay. The barometer is falling, and she is sure it will rain. I ran all the way; I'm quite out of breath, and I mustn't stay a minute, for aunt said if I dawdled I should have no silk gown."

"Never mind, I'll give you a green one instead," said Mark. "I'll pitch if you'll rake after me."

"I don't think I can," returned Janey, glancing at her hands, "I never do at home, you know; but I'll try, if you'll teach me."

"They're a deal whiter than Rushy's,"

said Mark, looking at the hands. "Let's go and talk to father about it."

They found the miller up aloft among the flour-sacks, and when he descended he looked like a snow-man.

"Always glad to oblige Miss Martha, my pretty Janey," he said. "Tell her she shall have half now, and the whole in the afternoon. It looks threatening. 'Save the hay before the storm' is one of my mottoes, 'Winnow well before you grind' is another. I hate to see wheat wi' the chaff in it."

"Shall I go at once, father?" asked Mark, always ready for any change of occupation.

"By all means, my son; and I'll send up the waggon and horses in an hour at latest. I'm glad thee art so willing; I like the ready horse, even if he do fail first. But thou art both ready and strong."

"Tilly is a capital raker, father," put in

Jerusha. "I can manage the house-work if she may go too."

"The sooner the better," replied the jolly miller; "but we mustn't lose time if we're to grind the corn and save the hay. Now, Levi Tuck, don't be gaaping like a shark."

"Aunt told me to ask the fishermen to lend a hand. I don't know them all, and I'm half afraid," said Janey.

"I know them as if they were my own babes," cried Mark, with alacrity, "I'll stir them up, while you go home and tell Miss Martha, and secure two gowns instead of one. We'll save the hay."

Janey blushed and simpered, and whispered to Rushy that Miss Martha particularly wanted to see her. But Rushy said that somebody must stay at home and keep house, and that somebody was herself, so she could not visit the villa at present.

While Martin Gay and Rushy began to

do double duty, and Tilly and the men were unusually alive, Mark and Janey ran down the slope by the mill-stream. Mark thought he had never seen anything prettier than Janey's curls as they untwisted and floated in the morning breeze, and Janey believed she had never beheld anyone so good-looking as Mark. They certainly were a comely couple.

They stood a moment on the rustic bridge, hand in hand. The happy water rippled and murmured amongst the sedges at their feet, the happier birds sang their love-songs around, cattle lowed, sheep bleated, ducks and geese pattered, while the half-veiled sun tried hard to disperse the clouds, and so equally dispensed light and shade. Mark looked into Janey's grey eyes, and felt impelled to say,

"You are very pretty, Janey; like a snowdrop or a white dove. You will promise to

come and rake after me. You can make believe to work, you know, and needn't burn your white hands. I should be sorry to see them brown, like Rushy's."

But Janey would not promise. She was shy and modest, in spite of her fine manners, and broke away from Mark, taking the green road to the villa, while he, somewhat angered, hastened to the beach in search of the fishermen.

CHAPTER IV.

UNEXPECTED VISITORS.

IT did not take Mark long to scramble down the rocky enclosure of the bay and hamlet. It was low water, so he waded across the fresh stream that ran through the salt sands towards the sea, and hailed a group of men who were either spreading their nets to dry, or lazily speculating on the tide, near their boats on the beach. Thanks to Miss Martha's voice and influence, the dozen huts and the small shop and public that composed the village—if such it could be called—were not untidy, and the fishermen's wives and families were not ill-

clad. Still they were very poor; and the men earned their miserable living as best they might. It could, indeed, scarcely be called a living. The farm-labourers were poor enough, but not so badly off as the fishermen; for the landsmen had so many perquisites that low wages were supplemented by them: while the toiler on the sea had none. The miller's men had the best of it, and he could always get his demand supplied.

The fishermen had to trust to the precarious freight that they hauled in by their *seine* or mackerel net, and the sprats, conger-eels, and blin that weighted their other snares; and hence their readiness to abet the smuggler. When we consider that one *seine* may cost a hundred pounds, and that many men must join to purchase it, also that a boat is a dear investment, we see at a glance, not only the hazards, but the outlay

of our fishermen. Each Beachton man knew his own particular portion of the *seine*, which, when Mark hailed his acquaintances, was carefully stretched out on the beach to dry.

"Haven't you finished mending that net yet, Job Tuck? You've been at it morning, noon, and night ever since I was born. There will soon be no room for a sprat to get out, and we all like a chance for life," shouted Mark, pausing below a hut, used as a sort of receptacle for tools, nets, and the like, outside of which Job was seated on a long bench, bending over the said net.

"Shan't never a vinished 'un, Measter Mark. Zo zoon as I've darned one hole the tarnation vish do break another, wallowing and vloundering to get out. They med zo well lie quiet, and take death easy, as we're obliged to do."

"You must put it aside to-day, and help

to get in Miss Martha's hay," said Mark, springing up the rocky wall, and standing before the hut. "You can station Dan here to mind the nets," he added, in a whisper, with a significant nod.

Job Tuck rolled his eyes, and returned a curious wink, which Mark understood. He was not like his brother Levi, being gaunt and wiry, and having a more expressive countenance, which means that, whereas Levi's was stolid, Job's was cunning. Job had also given his mouth a peculiar twist by constant chewing and smoking the obnoxious weed, which added a comic touch to his bronzed features.

Mark glanced inside the hut, which was nearly full of old seafaring matters, that left scarcely space enough for a man's body; then, with another expressive nod as he peeped beneath the rubbish, he hurried down the beach to rally the other fishermen

round Miss Martha's standard. They, like Mark, were most of them ready for a change of occupation, and "Anything to oblige Miss Martha," was the general cry. Mark said they must bring all the women with them, and leave the boys to watch the nets and boats till nightfall; when, weather propitious, they meditated a mackerel haul. The women and children, whether of the sea or farm, were mostly engaged in making nets, by which they eked out a livelihood; but all were alive at a call from Miss Martha, and the prospect of a sixpence and a supper.

"Have you seen the *Sea Serpent?*" asked Mark of one of the men, who was looking at some distant object through a telescope.

"I'm thinking she be right a-head," was the whispered reply. "That do look oncommon like her."

Mark took the telescope, and recognised the vessel.

Meanwhile Janey had returned to Miss Martha, who was routing about her little world as usual, reprimanding here, giving orders there, and making a great stir. Every time she went through the passage she knocked the barometer impatiently, and said aloud, "What a fool I am! as if that provoking machine could stay the rain! It sticks at one place as tight as a muscle. Here you are at last!" she added, as Janey entered, out of breath; "as well send cock-robin a message as you; better, for he knows his business. All birds do. Look you at that starling following Dandy; he knows that Dandy pulls up the worms with the grass, and so by foresight gets his dinner. If Dandy was in the stable Star would be a-top of a sheep pecking the worms out of his fleece, and earning his meal. Birds have a deal more sense than boarding-school misses. I'll be bound you wouldn't know

how to beat a snail on a stone till you break his shell and dine upon him, as a thrush does."

"I don't think I should, aunt," said Janey, shuddering. "But, indeed, I've been quick, and everybody's coming."

This announcement turned Miss Martha from one of her pet themes—the universal genius of animals. She would never call it instinct. She was astonished to find Janey ready for service of any kind, and proposing to start at once for the hay-field.

"You!" she shouted. "You must put on those new-fangled articles—goloshes and a waterproof, then, in case of a shower—and gloves! don't forget them. There! get along with you, and don't begin the rain," she added, seeing tears in Janey's eyes, who, nevertheless, hurried to the hay-field.

Nearly all Beachton had gone thither,

and before two o'clock the miller, his men, and his team, followed the general example, so that Miss Martha and Jerusha were left alone in their respective dwellings to keep house. Neither of them, however, remained long alone, for Miss Martha was, much against her will, disturbed by a visit from her friend and admirer, Captain Bowles, while Jerusha was surprised by two intruders, both equally unexpected.

Jerusha had taken her work to the porch —her favourite resort of a warm day—and was busily stitching at one of Mark's wristbands. She had much sewing to do, and was, therefore, not displeased to have an afternoon and evening to herself; for, although of a disposition to cling to everyone she loved, she was "never less alone than when alone." The rain had kept off, though the sun had not succeeded in his conquest of the clouds. But there came a

cool breeze from the sea, which played around her and her flowers, and seemed to brace the throats of the singing birds, usually relaxed during the heat. They warbled lustily and in continuous chorus in the woods beneath the hills, while in the clouds above the larks were searching for the sun, and calling upon him, with their exquisite and heaven-born harmonies, to come forth and meet them. The sheep-dog Surfy—so called from his white coat—lay at Jerusha's feet, asleep, and a big tortoiseshell cat slumbered on the opposite porch-seat. Now and again the cows and sheep appeared and disappeared in front, as they came and went in search of the sweet short grass; or the impudent crows perched close to the low wall. The birds were as tame in front as the poultry at the back of the mill, but, as a rule, the feathered creatures preferred the back, on account of the stray grain that fell

from the bushels and sacks of grist. Of a hard Winter the back was a sight to see.

But this is Summer, and Rushy warbles a low tone over her work, as if to unite in Nature's jubilant refrain. She is thinking of Mark, and her thoughts are almost prayers, for she wishes that it would please God to make him contented with home, since by nature nothing pleases him but a wandering life. It is difficult to know whether thought or her needle flies quickest, but the low-voiced hum slackens as they ply together, and she becomes so much engrossed by the twain that she is unconscious of a watcher and listener. She is, however, startled by a short cough, and, looking up from her work, sees a stranger. She rises at once, not caring to be subject to his scrutiny; but he is not terrific. He is a good-looking young man, whom she takes for a gentleman; for, although he has a small valise

hung by a walking-stick over one shoulder, there is a certain air about him which she fancies above the common, and she is a shrewd observer.

"Would you kindly tell me the way to Sandport?" he said, raising a straw hat with his disengaged hand, and approaching the low wall.

Jerusha came towards the gate, followed by Surfy, who barked a little, and eyed him sagaciously.

"You cross the bridge down below, sir, follow the path to the right through the trees, then take the lane which leads into the turnpike to Sandport," she said, with her clear, decided voice.

"Thank you; and how far have I to go?" he asked.

"Between three and four miles," she replied.

"I have walked over fifteen already

along the coast," he said, wearily, laying down his valise. "May I rest here for a few minutes?" pointing to the wall.

"Certainly, sir," replied Jerusha. "May I offer you a glass of cider or milk?"

"I should be truly thankful for a glass of milk," he returned, with a grateful glance; "but I do not like to trouble you. I have been wandering ever since early breakfast without food, and am fairly beat for want of it."

She went at once into the house, while he seated himself amongst the ivy on the wall, and Surfy remained to watch, uncertain of his intentions.

"A careful guardian of a very pretty charge," remarked the stranger, patting the dog, who, however, withdrew from his civilities.

Jerusha soon re-appeared, bearing a small tray, on which was the promised milk and

a plate of bread and cheese. Her mind had been much running upon smugglers since her disappointment about the silk dress, and her one idea now was that the stranger might be one, and that the valise might contain goods.

"He looks respectable all the same," she thought, as she surveyed the easy figure on the low wall, and presented the tray.

"I am very grateful for your kindness, and feel it all the more because I am a stranger in these parts," he said, taking the tray. "You have fine bold sea and cliffs out yonder!"

Rushy's suspicions returned, for she knew that half the smugglers were foreign. Still he spoke excellent English, which she could appreciate, for she was a great reader, and studied her native tongue carefully, with a view to her own improvement. She

re-seated herself in the porch, and took up her work, while he ate and drank with a good appetite, the tray resting before him on the wall. He continued the conversation by remarks on the beauty of the situation, and questions concerning the neighbourhood. His inquiries appeared to be prompted by something beyond mere curiosity, and when he finally asked if there were a coastguard station near, she became reluctantly convinced that he must have something to do with the illicit trade so obnoxious to her father.

"We have no station within five miles," she said. "No need of one, for we are all farmers, or millers, or labourers, or fishermen in these parts."

There was an inflection as of pride in her voice, which appeared to strike the stranger, for he smiled as he looked gravely, and with a sort of inquisition at her, across her

flower-beds. She had stayed her needle to make her statement, and lifted her head high, as if to prove that they were above suspicion.

"I am glad to stumble upon so honest a quarter of the globe; I hope I may some day visit it again," said the young man. "We do turn up where we least expect it in this labyrinth of a world, and meet with people whom we never thought to see again. I have found it so. Is that your experience?"

"No; I always see the same faces over and over, and over again. I never expect anything new, except in books, and there, somehow, one looks for it, particularly in travels and tales."

"You are a reader, then, as well as a worker. You women have the best of it when you lead such restful lives, with old friends about you, and books and flowers,

and this peaceful country," sighed the stranger. "We men must wander and strive."

"Not restful, except in sleep," said Rushy. "Country folk work as hard as town folk. All Beachton is a-field to-day to help bring in Miss Martha's hay, and I assure you, sir, they work with as good a will at pitching, raking, and carrying as other people at their occupations."

"So do you, I should think, if I may venture to say so."

"Yes; but not more than others who are born to it. It is just as it happens. Rich people take to idleness just as the poor do to industry."

The stranger was struck with Jerusha's philosophy, and muttered something about "the accident of birth," which did not reach her.

"But you are not poor?" he said aloud.

"Oh no! we are reckoned rich," she replied, with a sort of pride in which there was no assumption. "But then father and grandfather and all of us have been workers—except——"

Rushy was strictly truthful, and after the word *workers* she paused, remembering Mark; then paused again, suddenly recollecting that she was talking to an entire stranger. What was there in the young man she now saw for the first time that seemed to invite a confidence she would not have given elsewhere? But he, conscious of her hesitation, said hastily,

"Pray forgive me, I had no intention of being inquisitive, but sometimes one asks questions for idleness, or just to prolong a conversation. I hate impertinent and familiar curiosity. I hope you will excuse me."

"Certainly, sir, I did not find you familiar; but it is I who am wrong to be so glib,"

she replied, blushing, as she cast a glance from her mirthful eyes, neither encouraging nor repellent, on the good-looking stranger.

"Thank you sincerely for your hospitality," he said, rising and presenting the tray.

"You are kindly welcome, sir," she replied, coming forward to receive it with natural ease and grace.

Their eyes met, and, in spite of so short an acquaintance, there was a regretful expression in them. It is ever sad to part from one with whom you have exchanged a kindness, or conversed agreeably. So thought Jerusha, as the stranger took up his valise, again raised his hat, stroked Surfy, and departed with a "Good bye," and another "Thank you."

She and Surfy watched him down the slope and on the bridge. Standing there a moment, he turned, and, seeing her, took off his hat. She hurried into the house, ashamed of being caught looking after a

strange young man. But she did not feel inclined to resume her sewing. She took a duster instead, and went into her parlour to dust her treasures, which consisted chiefly of valuable old china and various books. Not only had she many volumes of her own, but the miller possessed a stock of large, gold-lettered works on religious and useful secular subjects that he had taken in from year to year of itinerant vendors, and had gorgeously bound. There were, moreover, one or two of Captain Marryat's novels, and "The Pirate," which belonged to Mark, and which she was obliged to confess to having read a great many times.

But even the most vigorous dusting would not remove from her mind's eye that good-looking, polite, agreeable stranger, and she was inclined to repine as she thought how different he was from any of her friends and admirers. She even went so far as to look

out of the parlour window, whence the bridge was visible. But she started back at sight of another figure approaching the house, and burst out laughing, exclaiming,

"Cousin Solomon! what on earth shall I do with him? what will Mark say now? Must I keep him to tea?"

Then she hurried into the porch, and withdrew her work before her new visitor came in sight of the front door.

CHAPTER V.

A FIRST PROPOSAL.

WHEN Mr. Solomon Hasluck entered unannounced he found Jerusha seated demurely at her sewing. She had placed herself in the window-seat of the hall, which seat she had so covered with herself and her work-basket as to leave no space for a companion in the old-fashioned embrasure.

"Good afternoon, Jerusha," said the new arrival, with a gravity which pre-supposed some evil tidings.

"How d'ye do, Cousin Solomon? Have you seen Miss Martha? and do you think it

will rain? She's in sad want of hands to help save her hay," said Rushy briskly, rising to shake hands.

"Ha! I saved mine yesterday. All ricked. Aunt Martha must have delayed. I certainly think we shall have wet," returned Solomon, not taking Rushy's very broad hint to go and help Miss Martha, but seating himself as near her as he conveniently could in a hard, triangular elbow-chair.

Mr. Solomon Hasluck was a tall, gaunt man, with a lank, sallow face. He had well-oiled black hair, and bushy black whiskers, carefully cut. He was clean shaven, but for the whiskers, and his thin lips were like a straight double line between them. His eyes were without much expression, and what there was betokened a certain hardness. Yet he was not ill-looking, though Jerusha thought him so. He was in his Sunday best, which con-

sisted of a dark blue coat with brass buttons, a yellow waistcoat, prominent shirt-frill, stiff shirt-collar just reaching the whiskers, light brown knee-breeches, and gaiters. He affected the costume of his elders, and disdained the trousers which Mark and a few beaux wore. He was not far from forty, and looked older, though he was more active in his habits than most of his younger neighbours. He had a ponderous gold watch-chain and seals, a solid gold shirt-pin, and was altogether of the well-to-do order of yeoman, though not the typical one. Some one had unkindly dubbed him as Solemn Solomon, a title which had somehow stuck to him, and which Mark had impudently abbreviated into Double S. Whether he owed this to his gravity, or to a somewhat ostentatious profession of religious observances, was not known. As he sat, with his long legs crossed, his back

straight, his eyes on Jerusha, and his watch-chain in his hand, that damsel made an invidious comparison between him and the easy figure she had so lately seen on the low wall without, which was not favourable to his suit, if he came prepared to declare himself.

"You are always busy, Jerusha. I approve of that," he began, after a short silence. "Like the busy bee, improving every shining hour. Dr. Watts's hymn, you know. I daresay you can repeat it."

"Why do you always call me Jerusha?" she asked, by way of diversion. "All my relations call me Rooshy—quite broad, which is right."

"For two reasons," he replied sententiously. "The least cogent" ("I wonder where he got that word!" thought Jerusha) "that we are but distantly related; the most, that I considered it unscriptural to

shorten Bible names. A Christian name should be what is written—neither added to nor lessened."

"Ah!" ejaculated Rushy. "You don't like what Miss Martha calls 'the tail to it.'"

"Exactly. I prefer Jane to Janey, Jerusha to Rushy, Matilda to Tilly, and so forth."

There was another pause, and Rushy dreaded pauses when Solomon and she were *tête-à-tête*. Never having had a declared lover, she did not object to his being considered a friendly admirer, but she fervently hoped it would stop there. Such was not, however, his desire, for he had actually come to propose.

"I daresay you have had no tea," she suggested.

"I have tea'd," he replied; "and I did not come to eat or drink with you to-day, I came for discourse. I find you better in-

formed, Jerusha, than most young women, and—better-looking."

"Indeed! You are complimentary, Cousin Solomon," exclaimed Jerusha, laughing merrily. "I verily believe that is the first pretty speech you ever made in your life. At least, in *my* life, for of course I cannot tell what you did before I was born."

"It is so, Jerusha. A man should never compliment without he has his intentions. It raises vain expectations. Women are the weaker vessels, and——" he paused.

"Men should never pour compliments into them lest they should burst with the flattery!" she supplied.

"Precisely. You always understand me, Jerusha."

Another pause, while she turned to the window, ostensibly to thread her needle, really to avoid his gaze; for his cold eyes followed her pertinaciously.

"How provoking these needles are! They put such small eyes that one cannot thread them. I must seek another. Excuse me a moment, Cousin Solomon."

She rose, but he intercepted her by taking her hand, which caused her to sit down again, after withdrawing it, and quickly resume the needle.

"Do not leave me, Jerusha; I have made up my mind," he said, bringing his chair close to the window-seat, and bending his head towards her.

"Is that anything new, Cousin Solomon? Why, you have the most made-up mind always of anyone I know," she replied, moving away from him.

"Assuredly, except on one point. I now acknowledge that 'man was not born to live alone,' and I propose that you shall be my helpmeet."

She perceived that the case was serious,

and, laying down the refractory needle, turned towards him. She had never had a proposal, and had often wondered what sort of thing it would be when it came—for she doubted not that it would come—and here it was. She had also wondered how it was to be answered; but she found no difficulty on the present occasion.

"You are too old for me, Cousin Solomon," she said, almost as grave as he. "You are nearly as old as father."

"I have considered that, Jerusha; I am hard upon forty; you are near twenty. There is nothing in Scripture against that slight difference; indeed, if you remember——"

"To be sure, cousin, I do remember," she interrupted; "but I suppose if age is of no consequence, liking is. I like you well enough as a cousin, but I should not like you at all for a husband."

Jerusha was always decided and plain-spoken, as Solomon knew, but he had not quite expected this sort of decision and plain-speaking. His long face grew longer, and his cold eyes unpleasant.

"You will think better of it, my dear," he said slowly, looking at her; "I have always been fond of you, and now I feel that I cannot get on without you, which proves that you were intended for me. I assure you that I see you and think of you, when I ought to have my mind on my business—or—my prayers. Woman was made for man, you know. You were made for me."

"But you couldn't be made for me, cousin, since you were born twenty years before me," said Jerusha, the comic side replacing the serious.

"Man was not made for woman," he returned. "You will think it over, Jerusha. I will speak to your father. Depend upon

it, you and I will be man and wife. I never yet resolved to do what I did not accomplish, and I am not hasty in my resolutions."

"Why, cousin, you nursed me when I was a baby, and were a playmate of my dear mother's. It is you who will think better of it, and not I, who can't think of it at all."

"But I have made up my mind, Jerusha," he said doggedly.

"Then the sooner you unmake it the better. I do not love you, Cousin Solomon, and I will never marry you."

His manner angered her, so she rose, and tried to escape. But he caught her, and succeeded in taking her hands, and so detaining her against her will.

"I will tell father if you do not let me go, sir," she cried, turning on him eyes flashing with anger, and speaking authorita-

tively. "Are you not ashamed of yourself for being so ill-mannered?"

"Not at all, since I have made up my mind," he replied, retaining her hands.

She struggled to free herself from his grasp; but the more she strove the more determined he was to detain her. She did not like the expression of his countenance, and began to feel almost afraid of him. But she showed no fear. Resuming her natural playfulness she said,

"Well, Cousin Solomon, this game at French and English is yours. I acknowledge you the stronger, though you know I never like to be beaten. Let me go, please."

"I thought you would, Jerusha," he said, with a sort of grim smile. "I know you, my dear, and your little tempers. I will release you when you have told me how soon we shall be married. I have made

up my mind, I must make up yours."

"Is this how people always make love?" she asked, still keeping down her wrath. "You are turning me into a handmaid, to stand before you."

"That is scriptural, Jerusha. You know woman was born to submit to man. You must submit to me."

Rushy knew that he was noted for his obstinacy and tenacity of purpose, and she saw that he was resolved to conquer her. But she was ready-witted, and said laughingly,

"Well, cousin, I don't know what father would say to this sort of offer. I always tell him everything, and I am sure he will think you very rude."

"Your father knows I have a good farm —thirty milking cows, and as fine a flock o' sheep as any man in the county. He knows my character too, and that I am a righteous

man; and, Jerusha!"—in a whisper—"I am like to be Aunt Martha's heir when you are my wife, for she's uncommon fond of you."

"I see," returned Jerusha; "and then the gig and horse, cousin! A girl would have you if it was only for your wealth."

Here she overstepped her mark. Solomon had no notion of being married for his money, though he believed any girl would accept him on whom he fixed his desire. His relaxing grasp tightened at the suggestion, and he frowned ominously.

"But I wouldn't have *any* girl," he said; "I've loved you, Jerusha, ever since you were a child. I've waited till you were twenty, and a good housekeeper. Twenty's a sensible, marriageable age. There's nothing you can't do of woman's work, and there's nothing I can't do of man's; so let's strike the bargain, and I'll have the banns called."

Jerusha could scarcely help laughing, in spite of her annoyance, and her change of countenance appeared a good omen to Solomon. But she was grave again instantly, and surprised him by her quiet, resolute manner.

"You will not gain your ends by holding my hands till you hurt me," she said. "I do not like to expose you, but if you do not let them go I will scream the house down."

"That would make no difference, my dear. You will be my wife all the same, for haven't I made up my mind?"

But Jerusha put her threat into execution, and called loudly for Tilly, who, much to her surprise, answered her summons.

"Lawk-a-massy, what be the matter, miss?" she cried, just peeping in at first, then retreating with a grin. "They be a

courtin', they be. Mr. Solomon a' got hold o' her."

"Tilly, come in!" shouted Jerusha, and she entered, holding her hands before her mouth.

Of course Solomon released Jerusha.

"You be to go to zupper to Miss Martha's," said Tilly, composing her inflated features. "I be a come huome, miss, vor you to go."

But Jerusha was out of hearing before Tilly's speech was ended. She ran away from her lover, who, nothing daunted, turned to Tilly with—

"I will accompany her, Matilda. I have made up my mind to—marry her. You saw how it was?"

"I zee you was a-courtin', zur," said Tilly, with a curtsey, for Mr. Solomon Hasluck was a great man in his way. "I'll tell Miss Rushy as you be a-waitin'. Hem be

too old for hern," she muttered, as she retraced her steps to her kitchen. "But hem be zo rich."

Solomon was left alone. He was as unaccustomed to "coortin" as Jerusha herself, and thought all girls made resistance to a first offer, and all men must overcome it. Although angry, he was not disheartened, but waited patiently for Jerusha's return.

"I've always heard that the women must be subdued," he meditated. "I did it. She was restive at first, as a young filly, then she kicked, then she came to, and at last she was quite pleasant-tempered. I know I've got Mark on my side, and I know how to keep him."

Mr. Hasluck put his hands in his pockets, and walked first to the front, then to the back window.

"A pretty mill, and a nice bit o' property," he thought, still expecting Jerusha.

But she did not come. He waited a while, and then sought Tilly in her back kitchen, who was preparing for a large wash on the morrow.

"Will you tell Miss Gay I'm waiting to go with her," he said.

"She be a-gone out, zur. I zee her run droo th' orchard," replied Tilly, with a significant wink.

Solomon's face lengthened, but he nevertheless strode through the said orchard after Jerusha. He was not a man to be disheartened, having, by a sort of dogged perseverance, managed, as he said, generally to succeed in his undertakings. When he alluded to Mark in his soliloquy, he did so advisedly. He had lent that incautious young man money from time to time, and was not entirely ignorant of his practices. He was aware of Jerusha's love for her brother, and was astute enough to know that this

love would give him a power over her. There was no doubt of his attachment to her, but it was, like many other such, selfish. He was resolved to have her, and did not speculate on her affections, believing, as he said, that "woman was made for man." That Jerusha should have withstood him, and was now evading him, rather served to stimulate him, and he began the siege on which he was resolved, by pursuing her. He had not much doubt of overtaking her, for his legs were long, and he was a steady walker; although he always kept an even pace, he could outwalk most of his compeers, boasting that "he never hurried; 'twas the steady mare that worked best." So he had no doubt of overtaking Jerusha, who would probably run till she was out of breath.

CHAPTER VI.

MARK AT THE CAVE AGAIN.

MISS MARTHA and her friends waited supper for Jerusha, but she did not arrive. The villa was crowded with the kindly helpers who had gallantly laboured until the hay was saved, and parlour and kitchen were equally occupied. All the good cheer the hospitable mistress of the small mansion could produce was spread on the various tables, and while farm-people and fishermen ate and drank in the comfortable kitchens, our friends did honour to the feast in the dining-parlour. Miss Martha sat at the head of the table, the miller at

the bottom, Mark and Jancy on one side, Captain Bowles on the other. A seat was reserved for Jerusha near the Captain, and all wondered that it was not occupied, since Tilly had volunteered to take her young mistress's place at home more than an hour before.

"I daresay she won't come. She is such a stay-at-home," said Miss Martha. "Cousin Gay, will you say grace?"

The miller did so, reverently adding a short thanksgiving that food had been graciously prepared and saved that day for beast as well as man. He was reputed quaint by some, because he brought religion to bear upon every-day life, and was not afraid to give God the glory by lip as well as heart. Many good Christians are nervous in this sacred duty—not so miller Gay.

"I just returned home in time," said

Captain Bowles. "I like to share the supper if I don't share the work."

"No song, no supper," returned Miss Martha, who was standing to carve a leg of pork.

Captain Bowles was a round-faced, sunburnt, elderly man, of jovial countenance. He had a pretty cottage in the village of Woolleysheepfold, which he had occupied some years. That he had been at sea all his life was evident, though no one knew anything of his previous history, and no one prosecuted inquiries after his first year of probation. He and the miller made acquaintance; and it was by his advice that Mark had gone several voyages in the merchant service after he left school at Sandport. Captain Bowles's notion was that a sea life would cure Mark's fancy for seafaring, but the result proved the contrary; the love of roving increased rather than

diminished. The Captain was an avowed admirer of Miss Martha, who took all the jokes poked at her on his account in good part, and gave him a hearty welcome whenever he paid her a visit. Indeed, he was welcomed everywhere, for he had a genial manner, liked society, and was a great gossip. He was very fond of Mark and Jerusha, and was quite at home both at the mill and the villa. If by chance he was heard to sigh, it was, he said, because he had no young people belonging to him. He looked almost enviously at Mark and Janey as they sat side by side, appearing very much as if some understanding had been arrived at between them, during the dangerous occupation of making hay together and giving and receiving that time-honoured "green gown." The miller, also, observed with complacency that Mark was unusually polite to Janey—for as a rule

Mark did not care for young ladies—and he began to consider that, although Janey had been to boarding-school, and had been delicately brought up, she might be the means of steadying Mark, if he fancied her. The good miller would have given his consent to Mark's marriage with any respectable girl, if it should keep him at home; and was not Janey Miss Martha's niece?

But Mark, even while politely waiting on Janey, was restless and absent, and constantly looked out of the window on the June night. Although the storm had kept off during the day, it was evidently approaching, and the sea began to rage tempestuously beneath the cloudy sky. A few streaks of blood-red sunset appeared and disappeared at intervals on the distant horizon, and the moon strove vainly to cast off her thick veil, and to pierce through the vapours that hung over land and sea. The

air was sultry, and scarcely a breeze penetrated the open window, so that delicate Janey looked even paler and more fragile than usual.

"Thee hast done a good day's work, Janey," said the miller. "Never saw a better one to rake, Miss Martha. Why, she kept close to Mark all the time."

"'Tis the first good day's work she ever did in her life then," returned her aunt, "and she has to thank Mark for it, I'll warrant. He did the work of two."

"Fair play, Cousin Martha," cried Mark. "How can you tell when you were idling at home with the Captain? You and he haven't earned your supper."

The tables were turned, and blushing Janey looked gratefully at Mark. But Miss Martha was impervious to the general laugh, joining in it herself.

"Idling, indeed! I should think so, my

lad. People who have made their fortunes and retired have no pity on the poor. Here comes the cap'en at four o'clock this blessed afternoon, and hinders a hard-working woman like me, who has to get her living. Wants tea, if you please, and nobody but me at home to set it!"

"Why, you scarce came a-nigh me, Miss Martha," said Captain Bowles, in an aggrieved voice. "I read the *Sandport Chronicle* twice through."

"Then you saw the account of Miss Hunt's wedding!" broke in Janey, vivaciously.

"Read it twice. Shall have much pleasure in reading yours twice," replied the Captain, with a meaning glance, which caused poor Janey to stoop down and stroke a cat which was clawing her dress, and mewing under his voice.

"Is that Tim?" shouted Miss Martha,

catching sight of the cat. "Now, Janey, you'll spoil him if you encourage him indoors. What do you think, Cousin Gay, I found out about Tim? I used to see him carrying dead mice in his mouth, and leaving 'em; so I watched him. He's a capital mouser, and takes pleasure in his work—doesn't play over it, and torment the poor vermin, but kills 'em and has done with it. Well, as soon as he had killed one, he carried it off, and came back to the barn for another, and so on. While he was on the hunt, I went to his haunt, and there, under a heap of straw, I found a store of dead mice that Tim had stowed away against a time of need. Now, what do you say to that?"

"A wonderful cat, but cruel and greedy," said the miller.

"I call him provident, and hold him up as an example. Animals have twice the nous we have."

As Miss Martha pronounced this opinion the door opened, and Mr. Solomon Hasluck entered. He looked well round the room, then said, slowly,

"I thought Jerusha was here."

"No, she isn't," said Miss Martha, tartly. "And who sent for you, I wonder? You're never ready when you're wanted, but always a day too late. You don't care if my hay's ruined, but I'll be bound you've saved your own."

"I have, Aunt Martha. Yesterday, providentially, I made it while the sun shone. He, he! But where's Jerusha? Matilda came to invite her to supper."

This was said even more slowly than usual.

"Ho! you're after her, then. Have you caught her? I'll be bound she's run away from you," said Miss Martha.

"Well," began Solomon, and paused, re-

membering that he had caught her, literally, if not figuratively, "I found her sewing. She left me. I waited to bring her going, as I bethought me she was coming here. But she didn't return. I asked Matilda, who said she was gone. Then I —I came here to seek her."

"Much obliged! Complimentary to your aunt," said Miss Martha, affectionately rejoicing in her nephew's evident confusion.

"Made a slip for once, Sol," laughed Mark. "But what can have become of Rushy? I know she was longing to be with the rest of us, though she didn't say so. She never thinks much about herself."

"Maybe she has gone to the beach," remarked the miller. "She often does when the labour's done. Sometimes she forgets, and wanders far, for she loves the works of the Lord, and His sea in especial. Go and look after her, Mark. Up Golden

Cap and down by the path to the beach; through the orchard. That's her way. There's a storm coming on, so make thee haste, lad."

Mark jumped up with alacrity, heedless of Janey's wistful glance. He assured Miss Martha that he had made a good supper, having been eating while she was discussing Tim's merits; whispered to Janey that he hoped to see her on the morrow, and was gone, even while his father was saying, "Mark, lad, thee hasn't said thy grace."

He ran full speed down the lawn, followed by Janey's eyes, though nearly hidden from them by sea-mist rising from below; startled Dandy, not yet stabled for the night, and caused that wary animal to follow him to the gate, in the hope to escape to wider fields and carrots; dashed down the path to the village, past the boats, by the net-house, and finally reached the

beach. But he did not obey his father. He did not go to the mill, or through the orchard, or up Golden Cap. He did not go in search of Jerusha.

He went, as may be surmised, in the direction of Hollow Cove, and, although he little suspected it, that was the way his sister had also taken.

When Jerusha left Solomon, she put on her sun-bonnet, and went to the orchard near the house. She did not, however, take her customary path to the beach, but, to avoid being followed, pursued a longer road across the cliffs. She was so much excited and annoyed by her late interview with Solomon Hasluck that she hurried on, heedless that there was a storm brewing. She finally reached Sea Gull's Nest, the abode of Chivers, and walked to the beach by the rough road up which Chivers went when he parted from Mark.

She sat down on a large boulder, beneath a projecting rock, and began to breathe freely —that is to say, as freely as the sultry air would let her. Then she untied the strings of the sun-bonnet, and went off, as she sometimes did, into a conversation with the sea. Laughter mingled with indignant tears as she made her protest to that somewhat dark, sullen, leaden element, for, it must be remembered, the storm was coming on.

"If I loved him ever so much—which I do not—I would not marry him. To catch me and hold me in that rude way! And he so sage and sober that one would think him a parson! Mr. Worthington and Mr. Manners are not half so solemn. As if I cared for Miss Martha's property! I love her dearly, and wish, with all my heart, she would never die; but as for Solomon, I see now that Mark is right, and

he is the most disagreeable man in the world." Here she paused, laughed, and wiped her eyes. "But he knew no better, poor fellow; how should he?" she continued, remembering his appearance as he held her hands, and laughing outright. "I believe he was sincere when he said he had set his heart on me ever since I was born. I wonder what sort of a heart it is? Like an oyster within two shells, very hard to open, and a very queer fish when opened. I am sure I hope he will shut it up again, as far as I am concerned. I hate oysters, and wonder how people can eat them."

This idea stayed Jerusha's rapid speech, and caused her to reflect. She had a certain originality of imagination, and great tenderness for all things, and this comparison between the tenacity and consequent after-sufferings of the oyster, and the well-encased obstinacy of her lover's heart, puzzled her.

"If the one suffers I suppose the other may," she said, again aloud. "One must not be cruel, and perhaps Cousin Solomon's heart, now it has opened, may suffer as great a wrench as the oyster. But he had no right to be rude, and I hope he will stick to his rock in future. All the same I shall tell father."

Just as she came to this commendable resolution a few drops of rain fell, and she became suddenly conscious of a sea-mist, so she rose with the intention of retracing her steps homeward. She stood a few minutes under her protecting rock while she fastened her bonnet-strings, and during the brief space so occupied she saw a man come down the path she had taken, and run along the beach, in the contrary direction from the spot where she stood. She felt sure it was Mark, and called after him, but he did not hearken. He knew that boats were waiting

to carry off smuggled goods from the cave, and that he must be there to superintend the men.

"Where can he be going? Shall I follow him and see what takes him away so late every night?" thought Jerusha, as she looked after him, and stood hesitating, while the storm broke overhead.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS MARTHA OFFENDED.

JERUSHA remained a few moments beneath her sheltering rock, watching her brother's vanishing figure, and hesitating. Should she pursue him, and so discover what took him from home so late, or should she return to the mill? It seemed as if duty led her both ways; but her clear decisive mind soon came to the conclusion that her father was her first object, her brother second; and she knew that the one would be uneasy till he saw her safe out of the storm, while the other would be angered by her pursuing him. She accordingly re-

traced her way over the cliffs. This was a much more dangerous proceeding than her previous walk, for the mist thickened, and the rain fell heavily. She began to reproach herself for evading Solomon and Miss Martha's summons, and to accuse herself of cowardice for having avoided him.

"Stupid man, it's all his fault—so old too!" she muttered, as the storm increased.

She breasted it, however, and managed to reach the mill without other harm than a wetting. She was, indeed, wet through, and the hour was late when she got home. Her father and Tilly were anxiously consulting as to whom they should send with cloak and umbrella to meet her, since Levi was not at hand, when she entered the house.

"Thank God, my little maid, you are safe back! But what a drowned rat you are! Where's Mark? I sent him to search for thee," said Mr. Gay.

"I think he passed and missed me, father. 'Tis a terrible night, and I hope he'll be in soon," she replied. "How kind of you to think of me!"

She ran upstairs for dry clothing, followed by Tilly, who was much more wrathful than the miller, and who gave her young mistress a sound scolding.

"I be zure as I wouldn't a-cum whom vrom the zupper if I'd a-knowed you'd a-stopped away too," she said, while busying herself to pick up the soaked habiliments. "Vor zure an' zertain you'll catch cold, and then you'll have another vever, and measter 'll be out o' hem's mind, hem wull. You bean't agwain down again, Miss Rushy!"

"I certainly am, for brother isn't in," replied resolute Rushy.

She was soon with her father, discussing the events of the day. He asked her why she had not gone to Miss Martha's, and she,

with perfect frankness and confidence, recounted to him her interview with Solomon. During the relation her cheeks, already rose-red with the rain and wind, became still redder, and she alternately laughed and grew angry, as she recalled the scene and conversation. She had ever been in the habit of confiding all her secrets to her father, whose trustful, honest heart was almost womanly in its tenderness and sympathy; and now he listened with unusual interest and attention. He frowned, however, as she proceeded, and looked much displeased. She saw it, and tried to soften her narration.

"Come here, my little maid," he said. "Be thee sure Cousin Solomon held thee fast, and thee alone in the house?"

"He just held my hands so, father," replied Jerusha, taking the miller's hands playfully, and imitating her own previous

efforts to free herself from her captor. "I was, perhaps, wrong to run away."

"Then he isn't the gentleman he thinks himself, but a bit of a bear at love-making," said the miller, half amused, half annoyed, and drawing his daughter towards him. "Come into thy cubby-house, and tell me if there is any hope for Cousin Solomon."

Jerusha seated herself, child-fashion, on her father's knee, and put her arm round his neck, exclaiming,

"Hope, father! He's nearly as old as you, and much uglier, and stupid as an owl. I'd rather be an old maid—indeed, I mean to be an old maid—and live here always with you. I have never seen anyone so nice as you, and never, never shall."

"But Cousin Solomon is well-to-do, and as sober and pious a man as there is in the country. He may not know how to make

love; but he'd be a good husband all the same," said the miller, reflectively.

"Then I wish him a good wife, but it won't be me," said Rushy, with a toss of her head.

"Just as my little maid likes. I don't want to lose thee," returned the miller, kissing the red rose of a cheek that nestled near him. "But my Rushy's hard to please. Hast never seen anybody to thy fancy?"

"No—yes," replied Rushy, candidly. "I saw a young man this very day, so handsome and so polite that I wish he would come again. No; you couldn't guess him if you were to try to-day and to-morrow. He's a stranger."

Then Rushy told how she had given bread and cheese to the wayfarer, and how he had taken off his hat, and what superior manners he had, while her father smiled, pinched her round cheeks, and said it was

no wonder Cousin Solomon had so poor a chance, since she had just parted with so grand a gentleman.

While they were thus discoursing Mark came home, wet through, as Rushy had been. He was resolved to avoid questions by taking the initiative himself.

"Here you are then, after all, Miss Rushy. Where in the world do you go when you take your walks abroad? You're as dry as a flail, and I daresay haven't been a hundred yards from Beachton."

"But I have, though, and I saw you at Seagull's Nest. Did you think to find me beyond there at high tide? I have more sense than some people, and when you are sent to look for me again don't go so far. I wonder you are safe at home at all."

To Mark's conscience Jerusha's words carried more meaning than they intended, for she believed that he had gone after her,

but had, as he often did in his heedlessness, overlooked what he sought.

"You are foolhardy enough to go anywhere," he muttered sullenly; "and these are the thanks one receives for getting drenched."

"I am more than obliged to you, brother," cried Rushy, jumping up, and laying her hand on his shoulder. "If you really got so wet for me it was very good of you, and I will make you a posset at once."

"There, there! let us thank God that we are all safe at home this blusterous night, and that Miss Martha has saved her hay, and that we have a bed to lie upon, and a house over our heads, as many a poor sailor hasn't," said the miller.

Mark was trying to persuade himself, as well as his friends, that he had exposed himself in search of Jerusha; and they,

quite willing to believe him, hurried him off to bed. The miller parted from him with his usual blessing, and a hope that the charms and dangers of the weaker sex might never again keep him up so late; while Jerusha, who had been watching him narrowly, feared, from his averted eyes, that there was something amiss.

"Will you say a little prayer for him, father?" she said.

"God bless thee, lass, for the thought," he replied, and they knelt down and prayed for Mark while the winds raged and the rain fell.

The following day Jerusha went to make her excuses to Miss Martha, who received her and them with her usual loquacious penetration and amusement.

"I know all about it, Rushy," she exclaimed, at the top of her voice, while her maidens stood still to listen. "The men

are at the bottom of all the mischief. They're like the monkeys, and try to make catspaws of us. But I was never befooled into pulling out their chestnuts, and never will be, so long as I'm in my senses, and you'd better follow my example. Yesterday there was that mysterious Cap'en Bowles hindering me. If he thinks he'll catch me and my stock and crop he's mistaken. Then Solomon hindered you. Now don't deny it, you little prude; you ran away from him. I saw it in his face. He looked like Tim when he comes prowling about after Tit and she's shut up in the cupboard, the born thief!"

Here Miss Martha, from the passage, saw one handmaid leaning on her broom, another arrested in her scrubbing of her milk-pails. Her voice rose to the "Boreas pitch," as Captain Bowles once confidingly expressed it to the miller, and she reproved them stoutly.

"Well, Glow-basons, did'ee never hear anyone talk before? One would think you'd been born deaf and dumb, and had speech and hearing restored by a miracle."

Then she went into the parlour, and, for a wonder, shut the door.

"Men are fools, and women idiots," she resumed. "I say, Rushy, what was the matter with Solomon?—he had lost his appetite, and I never saw him fail to eat enough for two before. He did nothing but say grace to himself, yet never swallowed a mouthful. Don't you throw away that fine chance; make hay while the sun shines. Marry when you're asked. It's my opinion that every woman should be obliged by law to marry the first man that asks her. There would be just as many happy matches, and a deal less bother than there is now with all the fools."

"Why didn't you set the example, Miss Martha?" asked Rushy, demurely.

"Because nobody asked me, of course," was the reply.

"Then you're bound to have Captain Bowles when he offers, if he should be the first. Wish you joy, Miss Martha," said Rushy, with a curtsey.

"You're an impudent minx, Rushy. See what I've got for you, provided you don't refuse my nevvy, Solomon."

Miss Martha went to a drawer beneath the glass bookcase, and drew forth the silk dress on which Rushy had set her heart when the pedlar and his pack were at the mill.

"There, Rushy, that's for you, and you are not to refuse Solomon Hasluck, because I want you for my niece," she said, letting her hand fall heavily on the silk.

"How kind you are, Miss Martha," said

Rushy, hesitating, and keeping at a distance from the table on which it lay.

"I bought another for Janey—a grey one, with a red flower, to suit her milk-and-water complexion. Where is she, I wonder? After Mark, I'll warrant. But this, with the pink stripe—— Bless the lass! why d'ye stand like a gawky in the middle of the room, as if you had never seen a piece of silk in your life? You look like a mooncalf."

"I am very much obliged to you, Miss Martha, but I must not have that silk gown," said Rushy, approaching the table slowly.

"Hoity toity! what next? And what new bee have you got in your bonnet? Dainty, I suppose, like Dandy, when he sniffs and flings at good hay because he wants fresh grass," said Miss Martha, angered, and pushing the silk from her.

"No, indeed, it is the prettiest silk I ever saw, and I should like it dearly. But perhaps you do not know that it is smuggled, and father would not let me buy it when the pedlar brought it to our house the other evening," returned Rushy.

"He's an old—an old gander!" shouted Miss Martha. "Here's a piece of goods at a fair price instead of double its value, and because the revenue hasn't gobbled up the best half, for it's no better than a turkey-cock with its blustering big tail—your old idiot——"

"I shall not stand by and hear father called a gander and an old idiot, Miss Martha," said spirited Jerusha, "He upholds our young Queen and what is right according to the Gospels, and so do I. You were very good to buy me such a handsome present, but as father objected to it before, I—I cannot accept it. Perhaps you don't

mean that he's a—a gander and idiot?"

"But I do mean it; I am not in the habit of saying what I don't mean!" cried Miss Martha, whose temper was roused as well as Jerusha's.

"Then good afternoon, Miss Martha," said Jerusha, stiffly, with a little curtsey and a very red face; and off she went through the flowery porch to the lawn, where Dandy trotted, whinnying, up to her.

For the first time during the pony's brief life she passed him by without salutation. She felt how much her temper must be roused, but she could not calm it in a minute, even for speech with Dandy. When he followed her to the gate, and she shut it in his nose, she knew that the temper was very bad indeed; still she had not mental resolution enough at the moment to turn and smooth either Dandy's coat or Miss Martha's ruffled mood. Lack of courage or

inclination to put down anger at the first rising often causes unexpected feuds; and she was well aware that Miss Martha's temper was of the hottest, and was wont to increase in flame if not quickly extinguished. Still she did not put it out.

"Father a gander and an idiot, and because he does what is right!" she muttered, as she ran as if her feet were winged across the bridge and up the slope.

The miller met her at the door.

"Solomon has been here, and I have mortally offended him," he said. "I told him that he had been rude to my little maid, and he denied it. He said he was only courting you, and meant to have you. 'There are two to that bargain, and may be three,' said I. 'And you and Jerusha may make a worse one; but I won't give her up,' said he. He walked off as stiff as a steeple, and with a face a'most as hard,

muttering something about the obstinacy of women."

"I am glad you spoke out, father," said Jerusha. "Some people think they can say and do anything."

CHAPTER VIII.

A YOUNG COASTGUARDSMAN.

ON the appointed Saturday Mark went to Sandport to meet Captain Dangerfield. He made a great point of attending the market instead of his father on that occasion, in order to avoid supervision or collision. He hastily transacted such business as he had to do for his father with the farmers who attended the market, and then proceeded to the pier. On his way he was met by Mr. Solomon Hasluck, whom he had not seen since the night of Miss Martha's supper-party, and whom he would gladly have avoided.

"I have just met Captain Dangerfield," began Solomon. "He tells me that he is to spend to-morrow with you. Let him have nothing to say to Jerusha, for I have made up my mind about her. Look you, Mark, if you want another hundred or so at a fair interest, I can lend it; I've asked Dangerfield to look in upon me. Come and meet him."

"Thank you, Solomon, I will; then we can settle about the loan, and talk matters over."

Good-looking Mark walked down the pier with a careless air, while Solomon looked after him, shaking his head, and muttering, "I wonder what they're after now. No good, I'll warrant."

Dangerfield was on the look-out for Mark, and joined him at once. They went together to a small inn close to the pier, called "The Jolly Tars," where they pro-

ceeded to a private room to discuss their business over certain stimulants that were always more dangerous for Mark than Dangerfield, the one having a weak, the other a steady head.

"We have nearly cleared the cave, and the goods have gone off to all quarters," cried Mark, exultant. "We shall be ready for another ship-load directly. The men have worked like wire-drawers."

"We must have money to buy it, and respectable men aboard the *Sea Serpent*," returned Dangerfield. "There's a revenue cutter off the point, casting sheep's eyes upon my sailors. Will solemn Solomon come down with another hundred or so, and will you come with me for another cruise? Try this hollands."

Mark's countenance fell. He was just settling down at home, and thinking with some steadiness of Janey. He was quite

ready to manage the smuggling business on shore, but at the moment he did not see his way to go to sea, much as he loved the riotous, exciting, dangerous life.

"Think it over by to-morrow," said Dangerfield, eyeing him cautiously. "I shall put on my best toggery, and be ready to escort the pretty sister to church. Monday we must be off again, so you've a day to prepare. There are lots of men to hide goods, but not enough to find 'em. Those who win must risk."

"Father won't hear of it," said Mark.

"Then keep out of his hearing, my lamb. Don't bleat, but trot off on the sly. We'll make it up to the old man one of these days. You and I are like man and wife, partners for life."

"Sailors and their wives aren't always partners for life, captain," said Mark. "If it were so, I wonder how many partners you'd have."

Dangerfield did not seem to like this hit, and had some difficulty in mastering the strong language that rose to his lips. But he did not wish to offend Mark, so he broke out into an awkward laugh instead, which gave his face an evil rather than an hilarious expression. He took a pocket-book from his pocket, opened it, and began to reckon up some figures aloud, for Mark's benefit, who in turn produced an account-book, the contents of which appeared irregularly inserted. Mark had no turn for figures, and, in spite of some years at the Sandport Grammar-school, was not an able arithmetician. He was too hare-brained for mathematics, and a sharper could easily have convinced him that hundreds were thousands, and *vice-versâ*. Thus Dangerfield had it all his own way in the explanations that followed the calculation, and led Mark to suppose that there was a deficit of a hundred

or so in his account, which he could doubtless easily make clear when certain moneys due on smuggled goods were secured. Mark looked puzzled, but had no doubt that he *could* make it clear, and said he would ask Levi Tuck and the other men what sums had been paid to them.

The pair sat talking and drinking till eight o'clock, by which time Mark had promised everything that Dangerfield asked, which included many points that might be damaging to others as well as themselves. Neither for a moment believed actual smuggling to be wrong, but Mark knew well enough that what it entailed might be very wrong indeed, and his conscience pricked him when he remembered that he had led more than one old friend and dependent into illegal trade.

Instead of returning home by the turnpike road he took the way over the cliffs.

Dangerfield accompanied him as far as Hollow Cave, which lay midway between Sandport and Beachton. Dangerfield, having satisfied himself as to the contents of the cave, and the secrecy of its site, retraced his steps; while Mark clambered down to the beach, with the intention of seeing if Chivers and his boat were near. The boat, but not Chivers, was there, so he climbed up to the cliff path again by the rock.

Just as he was about to reach it his foot slipped, and, in striving to regain his balance, a stone that he had laid hold of gave way, and knocked violently against his side, as it rolled down the rocks. He felt a sudden pain, but managed to scramble to the summit, when he became conscious that he had either sprained or broken his hip. The sudden agony was so great, when he tried to walk, that he was obliged to lean against a

rough fence that crossed the downs at that point, to support himself. He called aloud to Dangerfield, but he was out of sight and hearing in the opposite direction. While essaying to cross the fence, the pain was so acute that he felt obliged to sit down on the stepping-stone placed to aid the wayfarer over the rough stile. He looked anxiously around for assistance, feeling sure that he could not reach home without it. He was of a brave nature, and could bear pain as well as most, so he made another vain effort, and exerted his lungs to call for help; but he could neither go on nor obtain a hearing. Not even a sheep-bell tinkled, for the flocks were in the fold. "I am here for the night, I wish I were in the cave," he said, more philosophically than might have been expected, and glanced round at the prospect before him.

It was a glorious Summer night. The

crescent moon lay on her back, as it is called, with her points towards heaven's arch, her half-circle earthward. The Great Bear was right overhead, looking down upon Mark, as well as on the vast ocean, from his supreme dwelling-place millions of miles away; while the bright and constant guardians of the pole-star maintained their changeless course, telling him, if he had known how to listen, that God's servants must be steady in their course, and "always abounding in the work of the Lord." But Mark was only steady by fits and starts, and could not read the lessons of the stars. The fit was on him then, and while the planets rolled above, the sea boomed below, and the glittering night-dews sparkled on the slumbering field, he thought of his father and sister at home, of pretty Janey who loved him, and of Dangerfield who tempted him to evil.

"I will marry and turn over a new leaf;

but how am I to begin if I can't move?" he thought, struggling again, vainly, to be up and going.

While he was yet fretting and resolving, the moon travelled away on her appointed course, and passed behind the hill that flanked the down on which he lay. The sky deepened into the opaque, invisible blue of night, and the stars grew brighter and brighter as the darkness fell over the silent earth and whispering ocean. The solemn repose of nature seemed to arouse rather than lull Mark's conscience, and he almost forgot his pain in reflection.

This frame of mind was broken, however, much to his relief, by the sight of the distant dark shadow of a human being. He shouted aloud, and the shadow moved towards him along the dewy grass, till the figure of a man was visible.

"Where are you? What is the matter?"

said a voice that was certainly neither a smuggler's nor a fisherman's.

"Here!" cried Mark. "I have broken some confounded bone or other, and can't move."

The man came up to him, and tried to help him to rise, but he sank back again upon his stone. He was too brave to cry out, so he merely said he supposed he must stay there all night, unless they could fetch him from home.

"Where do you live?" asked the man.

"At Beachton Mill, a good mile and a half from here. But Seagull's Nest is not so far. The people who live there would help me. I think you must have come from the road that leads to it."

"I know. Some cottages up the ravine," returned the man, and before Mark could reply he was gone.

"He doesn't let the grass grow under his feet," said Mark.

He certainly did not, for ere long, voices were heard on the down, and he returned, bringing with him Chivers and another man, with a boy or two, who carried a couple of lanterns.

"What be the matter, Measter Mark? Lucky we wasn't a-bed; but we was just gwain off to the boats for a night haul when the gen'leman met us," said Chivers.

"Then help me down to the boat, and row me round to Beachton," said Mark. "They'll be out of their wits at home, and I can't walk."

"I am going that way, and will call and explain," said the stranger. "But let me give you a lift first."

By the light of the stars and lanterns he managed to raise Mark, who was slight, and

of no great weight, and, with the help of the men, to take him in his arms.

"It is my thigh," said Mark, with an irrepressible groan.

"You have a good courage anyhow," said the stranger.

The boys led the way with the lanterns, and they carried him with great difficulty and many stumbles, along the down that skirted the dangerous cliff-way, to the path that led to Hollow Cave. In spite of his pain, Mark glanced anxiously towards the cave, as if the stranger could see its well-hidden entrance in the darkness; and conscience again suggested that the game was scarcely worth the risk.

The boat was ready, and they managed to lay Mark in the bottom of it amongst the nets, and, as he knew and felt, amongst several kegs of spirits that lay beneath the

nets, ready for transmission to sundry farmers along the coast, Solomon Hasluck amongst them.

The stranger must have struck his foot against them, as he placed Mark in the boat, but he was not supposed to know what they were. Before he left, however, he took a good look at the men by lantern-light, who were too much occupied with Mark and their kegs to think of him.

"Thank you with all my heart, friend," said Mark. "But for you, I should have had a nice night of it. Won't you row round with us?"

"I shall be at Beachton in half the time by land," replied the stranger, springing out of the boat, and standing to watch while Chivers shoved her off and jumped in as she bounded up on a wave that came to meet her.

She soon disappeared round the rocky

point, and he remained alone, the beetling crags containing the secret cave on one side and above him, the road on the cliffs on the other, overhead night and her myriad watchers.

He was soon up the cliff, and on his way to Beachton.

While all this was passing, the miller and Jerusha were in much anxiety at home. Mark's frequent and unaccountable absences at night began to alarm them, particularly Jerusha, who was more alive to his failings than her father, though she loved him none the less. He had promised her to return straight from market, and she had even made Janey stay to tea as a reward; but poor Janey had departed, drooping like a May-ball in the rain, and Jerusha was left to watch alone; for she had urged her father, who was wearied, to go to bed about nine o'clock. But old Tempus Fugit struck ten

and eleven while she watched on. Everyone save herself was in bed, and she worked, read, and prayed as time hastened on. Now and again she looked out of door or window on the quiet night, and saw the moon glide down below the hill. She loved moonlight and Nature with an absorbing love, and read with delighted interest such books as explained to her the wonders of the spheres. But to-night she thought only of Mark.

"This would kill poor Janey," she murmured, as she went to the door for the hundredth time to look for him, just as if he would come all the sooner because she strained her eyes towards the road that led to Sandport. "I hope Miss Martha will send her home. Ah, here he is, thank God! Mark, why are you so late?" she said aloud, as she ran through the gate to meet him, as she thought.

It was not Mark, but his messenger, who said quickly,

"I am not Mark; he is in a boat on the water, and will soon be home. I am come to explain."

"There is something wrong—some accident, I am sure!" cried Jerusha, impulsively. "Pray come in, and I will call my father; I daresay Mark has gone off to sea again—he said as much."

She returned to the house, followed by the stranger, and they both entered the hall, where the candle had burnt low beside the book she had been reading, so that she scarcely distinguished him.

"I think your friend must have fallen and either sprained or broken some limb," he said kindly. "I found him on the cliff, and at his request called some fishermen, who helped him to their boat, and are rowing him home. He seemed well, but un-

able to walk, so he asked them to bring him back."

"Wait while I call father," said Jerusha, imperatively. "He has gone to bed, but will soon be down."

The stranger waited, and before very long Jerusha and her father appeared, each with a light.

"What has really happened to my boy, sir?" asked the miller. "I hope he has not been drinking."

"He appeared quite sober, and the accident might have happened to anyone; it is not serious," was the reply.

"Thank you heartily for your kindness, sir. I must go to the beach and wake up a man or so to help him home. We must call Levi, Rushy."

"Yes, father," replied Jerusha, who was looking at the stranger almost as if she recognised him.

"I have only returned a kindness, and shall be glad to go with you to the beach," he said, catching her eye, and smiling.

He was the young to man whom she had given the milk a few weeks before, but of whose identity she had been for a moment doubtful, because he now wore the uniform of the coastguard.

When she recognised him, she thought how unjust her suspicions of him had been, since he was as far removed from a smuggler as right from wrong.

"I thought we should meet again, but I am sorry for the cause," he said; "at least, sorry for your brother's accident, though glad to have been on the cliff when he lay there helpless. Thank you again for your hospitality."

"And thank you for your help," returned Rushy gratefully, and Mr. Gay and the young coastguardsman left her for the beach.

CHAPTER IX.

RUSHY'S "FANCY MAN."

MEANWHILE the inmates of Beachton Mill were all aroused from slumber by Mark's accident. Levi was at once despatched on horseback for the doctor, feeling troubled in mind lest it should lead to the discovery of their proceedings; and the other men followed their master to the beach, while Jerusha and Tilly made preparations at home.

"May I ask your name, sir?" said the miller to his new acquaintance, as they stood awaiting the boat on the edge of the waves.

"Firman—Frank Firman—a lieutenant in the coastguard, lately appointed at Muchsandy," was the reply. "I have been making acquaintance with the neighbourhood, and begin to know my work. Your daughter kindly gave me food the first day I set foot in the county, so I have already found Beachton out."

"Ho, ho!" thought the miller, "then this is Rushy's 'fancy man.'"

The boat soon appeared, and it was Lieutenant Firman who lifted Mark out of it. Half the village was astir, for in that small community what affected one affected all, and the family at the mill were greatly beloved. But the stir did not reach the villa, and Miss Martha and Janey slumbered peacefully.

Mark made as light as he could of the accident to his father, but he was in terrible pain when they placed him on some sort of

litter, and carried him home by a necessarily circuitous route. Jerusha met him, and led the way at once to his bed-room.

"Will you carry me? you are so gentle," he whispered to Firman, who had lifted him up, with the aid of his father, and they two bore him upstairs.

No sooner was he placed on his bed than his nerves gave way, and he fainted. Firman asked for brandy, and Jerusha said they kept no spirits in the house, but she had other restoratives. She was, indeed, a female doctor before her age, for she had a certain cupboard in which she kept various medicines, and an M.D. for consultation—in other words, a book called "The Family Physician," which she carefully studied for the good of the poor, there being no medical man nearer than Sandport. She left the room, and soon returned with a dose smelling strongly of camphor, which she admin-

istered to Mark, and which soon revived him.

"I am better now. How could I be such a fool? Thank you, Rushy. Only a scratch, father," were his first words, spoken with his natural manner.

Then, turning to Firman, he was about to add more thanks, when he suddenly perceived his uniform. He who had helped him so opportunely was the natural enemy of all smugglers; and he, Mark Gay, was a smuggler, and in league with smugglers.

Meanwhile, this "natural enemy" was supporting him, and watching Jerusha. There was no railway between Sandport and Beachton, so the doctor did not arrive for some little time, and Firman began to think he was no longer needed, feeling convinced that the injury was not serious. He accordingly proposed to depart. The miller insisted on his taking refreshment first, and

accompanied him down stairs, expecting, as men generally do, to find everything to hand. He was not, as men sometimes are, disappointed, for Jerusha had laid breakfast while they were on the beach, and her handmaid had lighted the hall fire, and placed the kettle thereon. While Lieutenant Firman was protesting that he was in no need of food the doctor arrived, and the miller took him upstairs to Mark, and sent Jerusha down, with an injunction "to give the young man breakfast."

When she entered the hall her first impulse was to open the back window, and let in the dawn and the fresh morning air. Therewith came in the twittering of swallows in the eaves, the first notes of the blackbirds and thrushes in the orchard, the music of the mill-stream, and the murmur of the sea.

"Do you think he is much injured?" she

asked, as she began to make the tea.

"No, I really do not," replied Firman, taking up the shining brass kettle which she was about to lift, and pouring water into her tea-pot. "But the doctor will soon tell us. If you will sit down I will give you some tea, which you need much more than I; you look very pale."

"Thank you, I am not tired," returned Jerusha, sitting down, and maintaining a right she never allowed another to usurp—the government of her tea-table.

In spite of her pallor, the disappearance of her dimples, and the startled look of her brown eyes, she was very pretty. No one could look at Jerusha Gay and not be aware of that fact. Firman had known many handsome and well-educated women, but none had ever struck him as so interesting as the miller's daughter. When he saw her first he had been taken by the smiles

and dimples, the rosy cheeks, and mirthful eyes; now he was more struck still by the softness, tenderness, and tearfulness that sisterly love had drawn forth. There was, besides, the resolution—her fingers trembled so that she could scarcely hold the tea-pot, yet, while she took nothing herself, she ministered to him. The rosy dawn poured in upon her, and flushed the homely room, and he thought, with a half sigh, that he had never seen a sweeter picture.

"For your father and brother's sake you should take something," he said. "You may have a long nursing, and must keep yourself up."

His kind manner and earnest eyes called the dawn to her cheeks, and she hastily poured out some tea, and drank it. Then she said, with a sort of apology, that she would go upstairs and listen. But her father came down instead.

"I'm afraid it is a bad job," he said. "He has put out the hip-joint and sprained his knee. Dr. Walsh says he can be mended, but that he will have to keep quiet for some weeks at least. He is going to set it, and says I must hold him, though Mark laughs at the notion."

The miller looked very pale. He was known far and near as the tenderest-hearted man in the country, who, as everybody said, "wouldn't harm a vlea if he was so lucky as to catch 'un;" and although manly enough as regarded his own pains, was weak as a child when other people suffered.

"I will go, dear father," said Jerusha, rising. "You know they call me Dr. Gay, though I know my rank too well to have condescended to set a limb."

She rose as she spoke, forcing a smile, and, forgetting Firman's presence, or ignoring it, kissed her father.

She was about to leave the room, and the miller was striving to detain her, when the lieutenant got up quickly, and said, with decision, that he would help the doctor, for he had seen more than one similar case. Without waiting for permission, or listening to Rushy's resolute protest, who never quite liked being interfered with, he ran upstairs.

"A likely and kindly young man, Rushy," said the miller, sinking into a chair, leaning his elbows on the table, and stopping his ears. "I'm a coward, but I can't bear it."

"But he's a stranger, father," said Jerusha, laying her hand on his shoulder. "I would rather be there myself. I dislike being meddled with."

"Don't leave me, my darling. It kills me to see Mark suffer, though he is brave as needs be. They are doing it now—I feel it in every nerve of my body, and I have been told that it is a terrible operation."

"Doubtless it is God's way of dealing with him, father," said Jerusha, who had perfect faith, undimmed by doubt, in the overruling providence of the Most High. "Perhaps He has merciful intentions of steadying brother, and keeping him at home, for his heart is still on the sea."

"I don't gainsay that He knows best, Rushy; but 'the spirit is willing, the flesh weak.'"

Jerusha fancied she heard a groan. Her heart stopped as she uplifted her eyes, and prayed that God would graciously bring her brother through.

Although it seemed hours to the twain, it was not very long before Firman returned.

"It is all over; he bore it like a hero!" he said, cheerfully, holding out his hand involuntarily to Jerusha, who laid hers in it, and looked into his face with strained, eager eyes. "He will do well if he can be kept quiet.

You had better go to bed while the doctor is with him. Good-bye."

"Are you going?" exclaimed Jerusha, her cheeks flushing.

"I must. I may get into disgrace for this delay; but I could not act otherwise."

"We shall never forget this good turn, sir," said the miller, roused to his natural manner. "You will look in upon us whenever you come this way, and may be sure of a hearty welcome. If I or mine can ever be of use to you let us know."

"I will," said Firman, shaking the miller's hand heartily, and going out into the delicious morning air with a backward glance at Jerusha.

CHAPTER X.

A RESTLESS SABBATH.

IT was the busiest, most uneasy Sunday Jerusha had ever spent. She usually walked twice to church, whatever the weather, and managed to be there in time for an hour's teaching at the Sunday-school, before each service. To-day she was unable to go at all. Her father kept a neat gig, but he never allowed his horses to work on Sunday, saying that they needed a day of rest even more than man. Dandy was the only beast of burden belonging to Beachton that laboured on the seventh day, and his labour

was light. Besides, he had little to do in the week. He always drew Miss Martha's pony-carriage to church, once a day at least, for she could not manage the walk twice, and she was as regular a church-goer as Jerusha. She usually invited Jerusha to return with her, and never failed to declare that Dandy went twice as fast when that damsel was behind him; for nothing gave Rushy greater pleasure than to be allowed to take the reins. She had, indeed, a natural turn for government. But since the episode of the silk dress she had received no invitation to drive Dandy, or tenant Miss Martha's pony-carriage; and it would be difficult to say which of the trio felt the most aggrieved by the abstinence.

"We will have nothing more to say to the pert minx, Dandy," said Miss Martha, that identical Sunday morning, giving the unoffending pony a cut with her whip so

unusually sharp that he flung her a reproof with his heels, which went nigh to break the splash-board, and cast out Janey, sitting meekly behind.

But Miss Martha's heart smote her when she perceived that the pew belonging to the mill was untenanted, and that even the servants were absent. She knew that it was Martin Gay's custom to have a cold dinner on Sunday, so that there should be no excuse for non-attendance at God's house, and therefore something serious must have happened. She scarcely listened to Mr. Worthington's sermon, which she declared "was longer and drier than usual," and had no patience for the weekly gossip in the old churchyard, when her friends thronged round her; for Miss Martha was a personage of consideration amongst the inhabitants of Woolleysheepfold.

"Who is that young man, Miss Martha?"

asked Captain Bowles, who made a point of meeting her after church.

"How should I know? What are young men to me?" replied Miss Martha, sharply.

Still she glanced up in the direction indicated.

"A coastguardsman—I hate 'em," she said at her loudest, as Lieutenant Firman walked quickly down the path.

He had been passing through the village while the bells were chiming, and had remained for morning service.

"Those are strong words, Miss Martha," said a voice from behind.

She turned and encountered Mr. Worthington, the rector. He was a man much beloved and respected by his flock, in spite of his sermons, which were often beyond their comprehension. The south country peasant, half a century ago, was not so well informed as now; but he generally went to

church, and got as much good from the service, and perhaps more, than people do from more exciting preaching and praying. Mr. Worthington shook hands cordially with Miss Martha, and asked what had become of the family from the mill. He always knew when a member of his congregation was absent, and failed not to remark upon it.

Miss Martha said she had been making haste home to find out, when the Captain stopped her with a yarn as long as his arm, and a question about some young man. As if she cared for young men!

"Who is he, Captain? He has a very reverent manner," said Mr. Worthington.

"A stranger, and a lieutenant in the coastguard. I'll find out all about him," replied the Captain, whose curiosity was insatiable, and who loved gossip as well as any old woman in the parish.

The pony-carriage was waiting, so Captain Bowles had no excuse for detaining Miss Martha, who whipped up Dandy and drove off without returning his parting salute.

The old church was at the end of the long, picturesque village, and as Dandy galloped furiously through it all the people thought he was running away, but no one ventured to stop him, knowing Miss Martha's ways.

No sooner did she reach home than she and Janey were off to the mill. She forgot a resolution she had made never to speak to Rushy until she had accepted the silk dress, and called her loudly by name as soon as she was in the passage. Receiving no answer, she walked through the untenanted hall to the pretty sitting-room within. Here she found Captain Dangerfield, who was occupying himself by examin-

ing the valuable old china, which was an heirloom in the Gay family.

"Martin Gay! Rushy! Mark! where on earth are you all?" she was exclaiming, in her loudest key, when he came forward with the words, "I hear that Mark Gay has had an accident, and that his father and sister are with him."

Dangerfield was by birth a gentleman, and could be well-mannered enough when he chose. Miss Martha also came of a good old stock, and had been well-bred, in spite of her free speaking! so the bow and curtsey that ensued were quite polite. They had never met before, and each glanced inquisitively at the other. Dangerfield's eyes passed on to pretty Janey, who was behind her aunt, and in a state of anxious excitement about Mark, while Miss Martha's rested on him. She was one of those often mistaken people who take likes and dis-

likes at first sight. To use Tilly's familiar phrase, she "took again" the captain at once.

"I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance," she said, with an inward chuckle at her own fine speech. "What on earth has Mark been after now?"

"My name is Dangerfield. I saw him last night, and he was as well as ever," was the reply.

"Janey, go and rout up Rushy. Dangerfield—you are as unlike your father as a weasel to a dormouse. Never catch a weasel asleep, you know, and if your father had woke up oftener 'twould have been the better for him. Too much of a fine gentleman to manage Dangerfield Grange. Is it yours still? Do you live there?"

"As much as the rats have left me of the house is mine, and I live in it when I am

at home, which is seldom. The land is gone. May I ask your name?"

"Hasluck, Miss Martha Hasluck. Knew your mother well, and a good sort of woman she was; worth a hundred of your father. So are all the women of all the men I ever came across for that much. Here's one of them. Worth a good many of her brother Mark."

Rushy entered, followed by Janey, who had been crying.

"What's all this about? What has that scapegrace been doing now?" asked Miss Martha, her heart hardening a little.

"He slipped as he was coming over the cliff last night, and put out his hip-joint," replied Jerusha. "It is a mercy that he was not killed."

"Then he's tied by the leg for once in his life. But is it really serious, Rushy?"

"Not if he can be kept quiet, so as not

to put the joint out of place again now that it is set, Dr. Walsh says;" then Jerusha added, turning to Dangerfield, whom she had not met before, "Mark bids me tell you, Captain Dangerfield, that he will see you this afternoon, though I think him too ill to see anyone fresh. He is in great pain, and very feverish and excitable. The doctor orders perfect quiet."

"I will be careful not to excite him. I am a capital nurse, and know all his ways," replied Dangerfield, with a glance that seemed to look Jerusha through.

"Better come over and dine with me, and come here some other day," suggested Miss Martha.

But Dangerfield declined. He said he must see his old chum and comrade before he set sail again, and was, besides, anxious to have a talk with Mr. Gay, whose acquaintance he wished to improve.

"It must not be for long," said Rushy, decidedly, returning an admiring glance from Dangerfield by one of somewhat displeased penetration. "And father is quite upset; he has not been in bed all night. I am afraid he will be unequal to much conversation."

"A good strong will there," said Miss Martha, with a look at Dangerfield. "You can easily get over Mark Gay, but not his sister. When are you coming to fetch the silk, Rushy?"

"Oh, Miss Martha, if only you would excuse and forgive me! But you know father will not let us have anything to do with smuggled goods," said Jerusha.

"There, you see her, Captain Dangerfield," cried Miss Martha. "As pretty a piece of silk as ever an old woman offered to a young one, but because it came from over the water, and the shark of a revenue

don't swallow half of it, she wouldn't accept it. Set her up, indeed!"

"I daresay she is quite right," said Dangerfield, politely. "It is best to be on the safe side."

But Miss Martha saw a bad expression in his eye, and made her own comment.

"I take the side as it comes, safe or slippery. No good to lose time picking one's way," she said. "Now, Rushy, I'm coming to sit up with Mark to-night, and you're going to bed. No good to decline. I shall be here by eight o'clock."

"If I could be of any use," whispered Janey to Jerusha, while Miss Martha took leave of Dangerfield.

"I will be sure to let you know, dear," said Jerusha.

By the time they were gone, dinner was ready, and as Mark made a great point of Dangerfield's being hospitably entertained,

Mr. Gay and his daughter left him for the meal. He was indeed anxious to be alone to consider what he had best do and say. He had, as yet, had no time for reflection, since intense pain and the arrangements necessary upon a really serious injury had occupied him thoroughly. He was now, however, bound, splintered, and motionless from waist to foot, and knew that he must so continue for some time to come. That he already fretted against the chain did not make it the less imprisoning. He blamed all but himself for the accident—the cavern, the rocks, and especially Dangerfield. Still he felt powerless to break even a slight link of it. He knew that he was in Dangerfield's hands, and that they were stronger than his whole body. But a sleepless night and the fever attendant upon his accident rendered him incapable of using even such judgment as he had. Perhaps, had he been

in a calmer frame of mind, he would have acknowledged that the great God, in whom his father and sister trusted, had listened to their prayers, and working, as He often does, through an apparent misfortune, was opening for him a way of escape from evils he could not foresee.

While he was trying to resolve what he should say to Dangerfield, the dinner below stairs was not as cheerful as the meals at the mill usually were. Martin Gay was always hospitable, and pressed his guest to eat with unfashionable persistence, but his mind ran upon his son. He did not know that he had been at "The Jolly Tars" the previous day, but he felt sure that he must have been drinking, and this was a greater trouble to him than the accident. He was one who feared God rather than man, and in his own shortcomings, as well as those of his children, it was the All-seeing Eye he

dreaded, and not that of any short-sighted fellow-mortal.

"Mark is high-spirited and self-willed, and I may have indulged him too much," he said to Captain Dangerfield. "May God forgive me if it is my fault, and give him wisdom and piety with years! I am thankful to you, Captain, for your kindness to him when at sea. I trust to you to persuade him all you can to stop at home now, and settle down. He thinks uncommon well of you, and a word of advice from you would be worth more than many from me."

Dangerfield attempted to smile an acknowledgment of this kind speech; but Jerusha, who was watching him, saw the knitted brows, and remarked that he did not reply.

"You will assuredly decline to take him another voyage with you, and that will settle him," she said, fixing her eyes on him.

"He would go with some one else if he fancied it," replied Dangerfield, boldly returning her glance. "But as I am off to-morrow, and he is safe in bed, there need be no fear. I'll preach any sermon of which his sister Jerusha gives the text, though I wasn't born a parson."

"Take the fifth commandment from beginning to end," said Jerusha, at once. "Father wants him at home, and this is the land which 'The Lord his God has given him.'"

Dangerfield's countenance changed; he had not expected so apt a rejoinder, and he could not fail to remember that he had been himself a disobedient son, and that his own inheritance lay waste. But, while he felt the rebuke, he admired the rebuker. He, as well as Solomon Hasluck, had "made up his mind" in more ways than one.

When Jerusha went up to prepare Mark

for his visit Mark asked her, as a particular favour, to go to church, and prevail on his father to accompany her. He wished to be alone in the house with Dangerfield.

"*I* shall certainly not leave you, though I am sure it would be best for father to go to church," she rejoined.

Accordingly, when she went downstairs again, she gave Mark's message, and added that there could be no reason why the whole household should remain at home, since he was not in danger.

"I will sit with your son," said Dangerfield. "I meant to go with you to church this afternoon, but as it has turned out, duty to an old comrade keeps me at home."

"Not the least necessity," said frank Rushy. "Dr. Walsh ordered quiet, and I shall only allow you half an hour. I told Mark so. Look at Thomas Fudgit, he is pointing at half-past two. When he strikes

three you leave Mark and I take your place. Father, dear, you are just in time for church."

"Ruled by my children you see, Captain," said the miller, smiling, while he led the way to Mark's room, and Rushy brushed his hat.

Then he went to church accompanied by two or three of his people.

The interview between Dangerfield and Mark was not as smooth as it should have been under the circumstances. Dangerfield did not believe in broken limbs. When one of his own sailors had an accident his language was none of the choicest, and when left alone with Mark he could ill restrain his temper. The Gays had always had a high character for honour and honesty, and he wanted Mark on board the *Sea Serpent* as a sort of blind. Moreover, he wanted the money which this accident might prevent his getting.

"'Tis no fault of mine," said Mark, sullenly. "You know I would rather be with you than here. If I hadn't gone in your service to the cave I shouldn't have been in this state. Solomon will lend you the money, and by the time you have another cargo to run into Hollow Cove I shall be about again. They must be waiting for one down about the Grange by this time."

"The coastguard and revenue cutters are swarming there, and we must turn the wind that blows in their sails," responded Dangerfield. "No suspicion here as yet. Double S. knows that the rats that are eating up the Grange won't endorse my bond, while you have a wealthy father as your backbone. I shall send the canting old hypocrite to you."

"Can't you let me alone now I am struck down?" asked Mark, pettishly. "I shall

never get well if I am tormented in this way. I wish I had never seen you. I shouldn't have been here, tied and bound, if I hadn't."

It would be unprofitable to pursue this conversation that was continued briskly, and not very amicably, during Jerusha's stated half-hour. It is sufficient to say that it did Mark much harm. He was so excited before its close that his tempter was obliged to turn it.

He did so abruptly by an allusion to Jerusha.

"I used to laugh, Mark, when you went up to mast-head in praise of your pretty sister. But you didn't run her too high. Almost make a man turn short and settle down. Plenty of sense too, and the manners of a lady. Lady of the manor! ha, ha! the Grange was a manor-house once."

Mark was fretting to find a proper reply,

when he heard, "One—two—three!" from the hall clock.

"That clock will drive me mad!" he exclaimed. "I have heard every stroke of it for twelve hours."

"We will stop it," said Jerusha, who entered as he spoke.

She retreated immediately, ran downstairs, and stopped the clock, ejaculating as she did so, "Poor Thomas Fudgit! Poor Father Time! obliged to stand still for once in your life!" and then she returned to Mark's room with her arms full of books.

"Your time is up, Captain Dangerfield. Our clock is as true as they say your North Pole is. Father will be in to tea, and there are plenty of good books in the parlour," she said, standing by Mark's bed.

The Captain rose, and took leave of Mark, expecting Rushy to follow him downstairs. But she had no such intention. She had

not liked his glances of admiration at dinner, and had not forgotten the lesson she had learnt as to *tête-à-têtes*. So she smoothed Mark's pillows and forehead, kissed him, and told him she was going to read him to sleep.

"Don't let him come again. Don't go down," said Mark.

She nodded, gravely opened the Book of Common Prayer, and began to read the Evening Service.

The well-known words of the prayers, and the ill-known words of the psalms and lessons, soothed Mark; and while Jerusha was on her knees he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XI.

ALL SORTS OF VISITORS.

THE mill was besieged for a few days after Mark's accident. Friends and neighbours came from far and near to inquire, and Mr. Gay found the truth of the French saying, that "A good name is better than a golden girdle." He had been always ready to help both rich and poor, and they, in return, would gladly have aided him.

Mr. Worthington was amongst the first visitors, and he took advantage of the opportunity offered to read Mark a little sermon on the text that His Heavenly Father loved those whom he chastened,

and that his accident was doubtless meant for some good purpose. Mark yielded to be "preached to," as he phrased it, by the rector, because he considered it a part of that good man's duty ; but he kicked against the advice of his other visitors. While his conscience told him that, had Mr. Worthington known all, he might have said more with effect, and that he might have listened, he grew restive under the slow torture of Solomon's rebukes, who, knowing much, sought to become a sort of father confessor, to discover more.

"Let bygones be bygones, Jerusha," said Solomon, when he had paid his visit to Mark, and was having some tea with her and Janey. "You remember our last meeting."

"I should think I did," exclaimed Jerusha, laughing. "I am not likely to forget it."

"I haven't changed my mind, my dear," he added.

"Nor have I, Cousin Solomon," she returned, decisively.

When the miller came in to tea Solomon repeated the words, "Let bygones be bygones, Cousin Martin."

"By all means. Let us all forget the past, and begin again," said Gay, heartily, shaking Solomon's hand.

"But I haven't changed my mind, cousin," said Solomon.

Janey looked from one to the other inquiringly, while the miller frowned, Rushy laughed, and Solomon glanced pertinaciously at her. Janey was neither speculative nor suspicious, so she did not attempt to discover the meaning of Solomon's speeches. Her thoughts were with Mark. Although she had not seen him, she was constantly at the mill. On one pretence or other she

came. Now it was to help Jerusha below stairs while she was waiting on Mark above; anon to bring a message from Miss Martha, whose mind was too much bent on the cooking of dainties for the invalid to reflect on the messenger who bore them. Whatever the state of Mark's heart, there was no doubt about Janey's. It beat slow or fast, according as he was worse or better, and when a message came to her from him, the little caged bird fluttered so to escape wholly to him that it nearly burst its prison. She was like a white butterfly hovering over a flower that she yet feared to alight upon.

Mark, meanwhile, reflected and fretted. He acknowledged that his accident saved him from leaving home secretly, and going to sea with Captain Dangerfield, yet he hated being confined to his room. Mr. Worthington's advice, his father's tenderness,

Jerusha's readings, were not without effect one day; but a letter from Dangerfield, or an interview with Levi or Chivers, or some other ally whom he chose to see, nullified them the next. It was of no comfort to him to be aware that it was his own fault, since he had not the courage to break through the meshes by which he was surrounded, make a clean breast of it, and stick to business. He sometimes wished to do this; but he felt bound by that "honour," said to exist even "among thieves," not to desert his captain, and the crew that immediately surrounded him. Moreover, he felt obliged to make more money by illicit trade before he could pay his debts, and settle down to what was lawful.

Rushy nursed him with untiring affection, glad to have him to herself. She knew him too well to preach, but she interested him in books and thoughts he had never before

read or entertained, while she kept him cheerful by her natural wit and mirth.

"I never thought you were so clever," he said to her one day.

"You see you have much to learn, brother," she replied.

"Others are finding it out. Dangerfield sends his compliments to my pretty, spirited sister, and hopes to meet you again."

"I can't return the compliment, for he is neither pretty nor spirited," she rejoined. "I wonder how you can serve under such an ill-looking man. I asked Janey if she had a message for you, when she brought the jelly, and she said, 'Oh no, thank you, but I hope he will soon be well.' We are all getting very fond of Janey, even Miss Martha, and I shouldn't wonder if she were to keep her after all.

"And make her an heiress?" cried Mark, with spirit. "If only she were an heiress."

"I hope not, for then somebody would be after Beachton Villa, instead of its sweet white rose," replied Rushy.

More temptations for unstable Mark.

After a month's restless, if salutary imprisonment, Mark was pronounced on the convalescent list. He was released from splinters, and allowed to be helped downstairs to a sofa in the sitting-room. All genuine women have a tender sympathy for lovers, so Rushy had invited Janey to tea on that occasion. The white butterfly was flitting about in the parlour, dusting and beautifying the china, books, and furniture, arranging the tea-things, and adding a particular rose to Jerusha's nosegay, when Mark appeared, supported by his father on one side and a temporary crutch on the other. Rushy followed with pillows and bolsters enough for a dozen invalids.

"Well, Janey, I *am* glad to see you

again, and no mistake," said Mark, as soon as he was properly arranged on the sofa—and nobody but himself knew the pain that arrangement caused him. "You and Miss Martha, and everybody indeed, have been very kind to me, and I hope I shall not forget it."

"I am very glad you are better, and—and—downstairs again," replied Janey, putting her slender fingers in Mark's hand.

He held them affectionately a while, and seeing tears in the shy grey eyes, pressed her hands. The miller and Jerusha looked on approvingly, their eyes not quite dry.

"I don't deserve it," said Mark; and this was the first concession he had made as regarded his own deserts. "You have all been better than I deserve."

"God bless thee, my boy! We none of us deserve His unspeakable mercies," said

the father, reverently. "Let us thank Him that you are here once more."

It was August, and rather cold, so there was a bright fire in the grate on Mark's account. The tea-things were spread, the brass kettle was steaming and singing, the tortoiseshell cat was purring, and the three-legged "cat" was awaiting the buttered toast on the hearth-stone. Jerusha soon made the tea, and Tilly appeared with the toast. Janey asked to be allowed to boil an especially fresh egg provided for Mark, by the little sand-glass on the mantelpiece, and the miller said he didn't see why he should not have an egg also.

"I have put on my best coat in honour of the occasion," he said. "So, Janey, if you boil it to a turn you don't know what the effect may be."

They were thus engaged when there was a double knock at the front door.

"Put in a couple more eggs, Janey," said Mr. Gay; and "How provoking!" ejaculated Mark.

It was Lieutenant Firman, who had called to inquire for Mark. He had been once before, when passing through Beachton with two of his men, but had not come in. Hearing his voice, Mr. Gay went out to ask him into the parlour. He was at once invited to tea, and accepted the invitation, intimating that he was off duty for an hour or so. Although Mark thanked him cordially for his aid in time of need, the sight of his uniform somewhat damped the pleasure of his company. When he was duly introduced to Janey, and seated, however, his genial, unpretending manners soon won upon Mark, and conversation flowed.

"I left you at a very different tea-table from this one, and at a different hour," he said, looking at Jerusha.

Her face was unusually flushed, and her dimples prominent, as she replied, "I am afraid we were very inhospitable then, but I hope we shall make up for it now."

"I am sure it will be my own fault if you do not," remarked Firman, looking at the tea-table, with its supply of fresh butter, eggs, and cream from Jerusha's dairy and poultry-yard, and white and brown bread from her father's wheat and flour. "If they live so well and look so happy when one comes upon them by chance, life must be pleasant here," he thought, as he glanced from Rushy to Janey.

Frank Firman did his best to add to its pleasures. He had, apparently, seen a great deal of the world, and talked agreeably. He was, besides, naturally polite to women. He attended industriously to Jerusha's tea-kettle, and waited on her and Janey unostentatiously; that is to say, he

did not make efforts at being polite, as some do, against the grain, but was so instinctively. He also helped Mark, and saved Jerusha all possible trouble. In spite of this Mark was the only one who did not consider him "quite the pink of a young man." He suddenly grew jealous of him, because he saw Janey casting shy glances at him across the tea-table, and fancied she was not so attentive to himself as usual. But a stranger who has seen something of life, and can talk easily, is ever a welcome guest in a country place, and Firman was not conceited enough to keep his experience to himself, or to consider it anything but ordinary knowledge. He had also that rare gift of holding himself in the background, and his companions knew no more of him as the "great I" of his own story when he left than when he came.

It is said that "a good listener" is the

best of company; but better still is he or she who, while conversing, forgets self.

"How do you like Muchsandy coast-guard station, after seeing so much of the world?" asked Mr. Gay.

"It is dreary enough, but a good situation for our work," replied Firman. "We can command the enemy, if we cannot catch him."

"You've got a martello tower against Jack Frog soldier, and cutters for Jack Frog smuggler," laughed the miller. "I wish John Bull had nothing to do with 'em. You're not far from Dangerfield Grange, where Mark's captain lives; and we've got a cousin, Hasluck by name, down that way."

"I have seen them both. Very different characters I should think," said Firman, looking at Mark.

"Very," replied Mark, with an uneasy

laugh, in which Rushy joined her clear treble.

"You know them, Miss Gay?" asked Firman. "What do you think of them?"

"Musn't ask Rushy," said Mr. Gay, with a smile.

"Why not, father? I think Captain Dangerfield ugly and disagreeable, and Cousin Solomon the oddest man that ever lived," she said, frankly.

"More candid than polite," muttered Mark.

At this juncture Miss Martha walked in, followed by Captain Bowles. There was a general stir, succeeded by greetings, congratulations, and introductions.

"Couldn't get rid of the Captain, so I brought him down here," said Miss Martha. "Glad to make your acquaintance, sir," to Firman, "though you are against free-trade, and I am all for the smugglers. Captain Bowles and you will agree."

"Captain Bowles!" ejaculated Firman, fixing his eyes on that gentleman, and again repeating, thoughtfully, "Captain Bowles! Captain Bowles!"

"At your service, sir. Anything remarkable in my name? Not uncommon in the South, where I was born," said the Captain, bristling.

All eyes were turned upon him, for there was some curiosity respecting his antecedents, and he was the only man of that name in the neighbourhood.

"I beg your pardon, sir. The name is familiar to me, but not as a south-country one," said Firman; then moving towards Jerusha, while the Captain turned to Mark, he asked her, in an under-tone, where Captain Bowles lived.

"At Lambswool Cottage, Woolleysheepfold. Not a very suitable name, though he is very kind-hearted," replied Jerusha,

laughing, and showing her dimples and white teeth.

"She would laugh at a feather, and cry at goose-down," her father was wont to say.

Firman appeared to forget Captain Bowles in admiration of the miller's daughter, though he frequently looked at him. During the remainder of his stay he talked to her, while the others were more or less engaged with Mark. He was as much struck by her shrewd comprehensive remarks as by her good looks, and when he took leave of her thanked her for a happy two hours in a lonely life. She replied that all thanks were on their side.

"Another conquest, Rushy?" shouted Miss Martha, while Mr. Gay was yet seeing him off. "Now I'm not going to let you jilt Solomon."

"A fine good-looking young fellow, but

wanting in manners. What business had he to repeat my name, and stare at me? Never heard his before in my life," exclaimed Captain Bowles.

"'A cat may look at a king,'" said Miss Martha. "He divided his attentions between you and the girls. He didn't condescend to look at an old woman like me, though I'm worth a score of 'em."

"*You* seemed to admire him enough, Janey," whispered Mark. "I suppose you don't care for one when one's down."

"Oh, Mark!" said Janey, with a reproachful glance, and by some accident the slender fingers again entwined in his, and Miss Martha saw it.

She had been watching them closely, and began to think there was something between them; for although she considered Janey a simpleton, she knew her to be shy and modest, and not likely to submit to have

her hand held by one who had not made her believe that he liked her.

"I must put a stop to that," she decided in a moment, and soon carried Janey off.

CHAPTER XII.

DANGERFIELD GRANGE.

THE coastguard station of Muchsandy lay north of Beachton, Hollow Cove and Sandport south. It was built on cliffs that overlooked a dreary extent of sandy waste as well as the sea. The houses were bare, and blackened with tar, which gave them a funereal appearance. They were of wood, and under some aspects looked like ribbed skeletons placed "up aloft" to terrify naughty vessels. With the exception of one small abode they were constructed in a block, barrack-wise, and had wild-looking gardens at their back, parcelled

off by fences, invisible but understood, and appropriated to each family of the coast-guards. These gardens were backed by hills, which looked much as if they considered the station an interloper, as the fishermen and many of the country-folk did. It had not been erected many years, and had scarcely had time to accommodate itself to circumstances, and to prove its innocence by good conduct. The small detached house in the centre of this melancholy spot was also tarred, to protect it from the elements, but it was supposed to be beautified by a few shrubs planted within a walled enclosure. These had, however, grown up humpbacked, thanks to the lashings of the winds and breezes, and always turned imploringly towards the windows, as if expecting the penalty of smuggling, for they were certainly not native to the soil. They had four windows and a door to which to bow their

dejected heads, and their depression was otherwise relieved by the coming and going of the coastguardsmen, Lieutenant Firman, and the amiable widow who reigned as sole housekeeper and domestic.

This abode was dedicated to the officers, and Firman claimed three rooms as his own, with the privilege of using the others when Captain Hardcastle was not there. The latter gentleman lived at Sandport, but came occasionally to gladden the hearts of his lieutenant and subalterns by an inquisition as piercing as that of the shrubs. It was hither that Firman returned after his cheerful visit at the mill, and he would have made invidious comparisons had he not had too much work on hand to set about them. Perhaps the trees would have been less mournful if they had found something to shelter; but the birds positively declined to build in them, and they had therefore

nothing to do but to bow and curtsey to the house and one another.

When Firman had seen his men, and parcelled out their night-work, as well as his own, he went into his sitting-room, and took to his desk. The room was not uncomfortable, though its furniture was none of the smartest, and it was bereft of ornaments. Firman had not been settled long enough to consider adornment, but he had arranged his books, maps, and necessary papers with care, and knew where to find what he wanted at a moment's notice—he was methodical, in short. A few photographs stood on the mantelpiece, one of which was that of a lady, who would have been pretty had the sun been propitious when she sat to that very uncertain limner; but either he or his assistant chemicals were not of the clearest on that occasion.

It was to the original of this portrait that

Firman began a letter with "My dear mother," and continued it with much rapidity, until he ended it as "Your ever affectionate son." He had acquired a habit of brevity, and had condensed much information in the sheet of note-paper before him. After sketching the mill and its inmates with a few clear strokes, he had proceeded to say that a certain Captain Bowles had arrived during his visit, and had described him, and quoted all that he had said concerning his name and birth-spot; then, without further comment, he proceeded to ask his mother either to join him in his dreary dwelling, or to go into lodgings somewhere within his reach. He told her of the picturesque village of Woolleysheepfold, adding that he had no doubt lodging and living would be cheap there.

When he had completed his letter, he lay down on the somewhat hard sofa, and slept

for a couple of hours. He was aroused by some of his men, to whom he gave orders to proceed to a certain spot along the sandy flat below, while he walked over the cliffs. They were all armed with pistols and cutlasses.

The officer who had preceded him at Muchsandy had been killed by a fall over the cliffs when on duty, and, as is always the case after accidents, certain heaps of white lime had been multiplied to mark a path of safety. Firman had, therefore, no difficulty in finding his way, especially as the night was not very dark.

When he had ended his beat on the rocks, he came upon comparatively level grassland, beyond the sandy wastes which bounded the shore, and about half a mile from the sea. Hence he reached a rough, rutty road, leading past some private dwelling-place to the spot where he had appointed

to meet his men. He had visited these parts previously by daylight, and had wondered at the strange, lonely, ancient house he had stumbled upon. It had been, apparently, an abode of some pretension in its time, but was falling to decay. It had looked to him wild and weird enough in sunshine; it appeared more so by starlight. It was surrounded by trees, amongst which were many ghostly poplars, and by hedges of yew, in which grotesque figures of birds had been cut years before, that had never quite lost their unnatural shape, and looked almost more ghostly than the poplars.

Firman was making his way down the stony, grass-grown road, once a drive, in the direction of the sea, when he was suddenly accosted by an authoritative "Who are you?—what business have you here?" He felt assured that the ponderous figure which confronted him was the master of the

mansion, and replied, quietly, "A coast-guardsman in Her Majesty's service."

"What do you want here?" was the next question, interpolated with an oath.

"I am merely on duty," was the reply.

"So am I. Just come out to look after poachers. Hark! there's a gun. Excuse me, I am my own gamekeeper. Wait here till I return."

There was no gun, and Firman did not wait, but continued to pick his way amongst the ruts. Had he been keen-eyed or swift-footed enough to follow the man he would have known that he encountered almost immediately several figures bearing burdens. By gestures more than by words he motioned them back, pointing to a thick wood in a direction contrary to that which Firman was taking. Then he turned, and rejoined the lieutenant.

"I suppose you are on the look-out for

smugglers, as I am for poachers," he said. "You are off the scent here; though people are polite enough to say my old warren is a smugglers' haunt as well as a haunted house, but I have failed to find them. I wish you would come in and have a look. It would ease my conscience. You and I should be birds of a feather, for I take it you have been to sea, and I am a sea-captain, Dangerfield by name. You are Lieutenant Firman, I think, stationed at Muchsandy."

Firman hesitated. He was shrewd enough to suspect that the speaker had private reasons for the invitation.

"If you will let me keep an appointment at the Gap, first, I will return," he said.

"*Soit, Monsieur*," was the rejoinder, and they separated.

The Gap was a wild spot with a bad name, just brought under the especial notice of Firman. He soon reached it, and

found his men there. He told them where he was going, and ordered two of them to follow him at a distance, and the others to keep watch along the coast. Then he returned by the same road, unaware that his steps had been dogged and his orders overheard by Dangerfield, for he was waiting for him at his gate. He followed him through a tangled maze of overgrown shrubs to the house, and they went into a large wainscoted apartment, that must once have been the dining-room. It was carefully shuttered, and there were lights and a fire. They had met before, casually, and interchanged a few words, which gave Dangerfield an opening for saying that he wished to make Firman's acquaintance, and would have called upon him had he lived on land instead of sea.

"You helped an old mate of mine—a very lame dog—over a stile," he said, with

one of his peculiar glances, which seemed to take in all and give out nothing. "Anyone who lends a hand to one of my friends lends a hand to me."

"It was quite accidental. I suppose young Gay has given up seafaring," returned Firman, answering the glance by one equally cautious, if less ferocious.

"He knows best. I ask no secrets and get no lies. Do you know his soft old father, and that saucy pretty sister of his? I should like to teach that young rustic a lesson or two."

Firman felt his hand move towards the hilt of the weapon he wore, but he commanded his temper.

"I have been at their house this evening," he said. "Mr. Gay seems to me only soft as regards the heart, but firm enough in the understanding, and I should scarcely call his daughter a rustic. Her manners

are very good, and she is, I should think, well educated. She has, at least, more information than most girls."

"Hum! Bitten like Solemn Solomon," muttered Dangerfield. "As to educated, she might have had the first education in the land for that much. Old Gay is both rich and respectable, but he and the Haslucks—also a good family enough—choose to keep their place among the yeomen, while we poor gentry run off to sea, or anywhere else, for a living, and they, or the rich tradesmen, buy up our land. Solomon Hasluck has bought most of mine. His farm joins the Grange, and he will have it all soon."

Dangerfield did not say that his father had squandered his inheritance, and that he himself had been wild and reckless all his life. He asked Firman to have some refreshments, and went to a cupboard in the wainscot as he spoke.

"I keep bread and cheese and drinkables here at hand," he said. "My musty old housekeeper is as deaf as a post, and takes a day and a half to bring them."

"I thought we were to look after the smugglers," said Firman. "Thank you, but I shall get home to breakfast, and I never drink spirits."

"Smugglers and poachers are not easily caught; but I should like to clear up the reputation of my Grange by showing a live coastguardsman that there is nothing in it but a deaf old crone and the rats," said Dangerfield, unfastening the shutters. "We're early to rise, if not early to bed. What a chatter those swallows keep up as soon as there's a streak of day."

Although Firman did not understand the game Dangerfield was playing, he yet followed him through the rooms of the ground-floor of his dilapidated man-

sion. He even went down to the cellars.

"This is for my own satisfaction," said the Captain. "You see the sitting-rooms are nearly void of furniture, and the cellars quite empty of drink. You can say so, and that there is not a hole for a smuggler to hide either himself or his goods. I will give orders that you shall be admitted whenever you like, for I am 'an honourable man, a most honourable man!' and, being in the merchant service, don't choose to be suspected of the contraband business. Ha, ha! not but that I can drink a comfortable glass or so, if you can't, be the spirits smuggled or excised."

His manner was so free and easy that Firman, a comparative stranger, gave him credit for sincerity. He knew that there was smuggling all down the coast, and had already seized smuggled spirits, confiscated them, and given their bearers up to such

justice as lenient magistrates imposed in the way of fines; but he had not come in for it on a large scale. Dangerfield, on the contrary, was well aware that his neighbourhood, and he feared his house and ship, were becoming suspected, and he daringly resolved to baffle suspicion, if possible, by the extreme of candour, and to divert attention from the Grange and Gap to some other point of the compass. Still Firman narrowly examined the passages and corners, as he passed through them, and suspected that there were still others more entirely dedicated to the rats and mice.

The day was breaking when they returned to the dining-room, and Firman took his departure. Dangerfield watched him down the path till he was lost amongst the shrubs.

"Bad luck for you, my fine fellow, if ever we meet in a smuggling riot. Your head will be some inches lower than it is

now," he muttered; and just as the birds were beginning their morning hymns of praise, and the sun was responding by grateful beams of light, he went to his uneasy rest.

CHAPTER XIII.

JERUSHA'S LIFE-STREAM.

"WELL, Janey, I couldn't have believed you were so for'ard. But 'still waters run deep,' as the proverb says," exclaimed Miss Martha, when she and her niece reached the villa, after their visit to the mill.

Janey was standing before her, looking meek and downcast, and apparently striving to unfasten a knot in her bonnet-strings.

"I didn't mean to be forward, indeed I didn't," she whispered.

"Fiddlesticks! You boarding-school misses don't know what backward means, except in

useful learning. I call it for'ard to let your fingers go twiddle-twaddling into Mark's as if they were crab's claws, never to be disentangled. Why, Rushy would as soon have thrust hers into a lobster's as into a young man's. Now, don't deny it, for I saw it all, and I don't countenance such ways. You have been here long enough, too long, for that much, and now you must go home. I'll have nothing to do with young women that make love to young men."

"Indeed, aunt, I didn't—it was—it was——" pleaded Janey.

"Don't call me *ornt*. I mean it. You go home to-morrow. No; next day. To-morrow you must pack and take leave. I shouldn't be surprised if then you were to ask Mark to marry you outright."

Janey's bonnet-strings dropped, and her tearful grey eyes met Miss Martha's with quite an indignant flash. But the protest

on her lips was lost in sobs, and she hurried out of the room to give way to her sudden grief, where her aunt need not witness it.

"I've settled that business," ejaculated Miss Martha. "Mark cares no more for her than a fox for a sucking pig; but he cares for the farm-yard she squeaks in. He's mistaken if he thinks I've adopted her, or any of the brood of such a cuckoo of a mother, who is willing to leave her eggs in any bird's nest that will house 'em. If Rushy had been a niece now!"

Poor little Janey happened to be the eldest daughter of Miss Martha's half-brother, who had died some seven or eight years before, leaving a widow and five children. Miss Martha's father had married twice, and she was the only child of the first marriage, and inherited her mother's fortune, which had consisted of Beachton Farm and a small house near it. She had preferred, as a

single woman, to live in the latter abode, and had improved and adorned it, until it had acquired the distinctive of villa, contrary to her wishes. Woe to the individual who used the obnoxious word in her presence!

"Miss Hasluck, Beachton, is quite enough, and more *aristocratic*, if that's your object," she would say with emphasis. "I hate your villas, and belle-vues, and plaisances, and don't care a straw whether they are Norman, or Saxon, or Patagonian. I am plain English, and Beachton is English; whether it means a town on a beach, or a barrel on a beach. What's the odds?"

When Miss Martha had seen that her maids were in bed, and had perambulated the house as turnkey—for so she phrased it—she paused at Janey's door, and listened for a few seconds.

"I declare she's bleating like a sick calf," she muttered, trying to open the door.

"She's locked herself in. Janey, Janey, I say! Open the door. I don't allow any lock-ups in this house but my own, and I've just seen to them."

Janey obeyed, and appeared in a trembling and dishevelled state. She was partly undressed, and the ringlets fell in disordered confusion over her white neck and shoulders. She was very pale, and tears were in her eyes, in spite of her previous efforts to dry them.

"Well, you have got a sight of hair, child!" said Miss Martha. "Almost as long as Eve's. Why on earth do you twiddle it up in those corkscrews, as if you were always going to draw a bung out of a cider barrel? Why, it curls naturally, and looks pretty enough as 'twas first made."

"Yes, aunt, but it would be too long if I didn't curl it stiffly," replied Jane, suppressing a sob.

"*Ornt* again! Once more, let me tell you that I like to be pronounced sharp and short, as if I was an *Ant*. Now, the ants will teach you a deal more than I can. They are at work from morning till night, and, I can tell you, don't tangle their antennæ, as they call 'em, in love-making. They have enough to do to keep a tidy house over their heads, and find their dinners. Now wipe your eyes. You shall come again some day. And take my advice, child—don't go after the men. If they want you they'll look you up fast enough, and all the faster if you don't want them."

With which profound philosophical fact Miss Martha left Jancy to console herself as she best could.

But the hoped-for consolation did not come. There was no reprieve. Miss Martha, like Solomon Hasluck, had made up her mind.

Accordingly, Janey went, the following afternoon, to take leave of her friends at the mill. She espied Jerusha in the orchard, and walked towards her. The mill-wheel was in active operation, and as she crossed the mill-dam at the back of the house, she perceived numerous carts, animals, and people waiting for the grinding of their grist, or for the sacks of flour ready for transportation. The mill appeared to be almost disconnected with the dwelling-house, though they really joined, and from the mill-dam the pile of building looked considerable, with its mill on one side, farm on the other, and homestead in the centre. It was not surprising that Janey should pause to think of the pleasant position Mark's wife might fill one of these days. Not that she was either speculative or avaricious; on the contrary, she was so foolishly improvident that she would have

married Mark to-day had she starved with him to-morrow.

While she stood a moment on the mill-dam, Jerusha came to meet her, and so helped to complete a very lovely picture. On one side the mill-pond, fed by the sparkling stream from the hills, and fringed with willows and rushes, amongst which two white swans dwelt and nested, together with numerous other water-fowl; on the other, the big wheel, scattering its surf and pouring its waterfalls; below, the escaped stream dancing thoughtlessly towards its last home, the mighty ocean.

"You are not afraid to cross, Janey? it is quite safe," said Jerusha, holding out her hand, while the swans came at the sound of her voice.

"Not exactly," said the timid but truthful Janey. "I was thinking how pretty it all is."

"I find nothing so pretty anywhere," returned Jerusha, stooping to stroke her swan's neck. "And it always makes me solemn."

"You solemn, Rushy!" laughed Janey.

"Why not? I am not always merry. The stream is so like life. It begins amongst the hills, we know not how; that is its babyhood. Then it runs, and plays, and dances like a child, till this mill-dam checks it; it tarries here, as we tarry when we are grown up; it seems to long to burst over the mill-dam sometimes, and then is content to rest. But for it the wheel would not work, and but for life we could not work. I thank God for life and work, for we can all do much good in our little span. But the stream is not content to dwell in the mill-pond always, Janey. See how it has made two paths instead of one, like two lines. Follow them, and you will see that

they stray away from one another, then join, then separate again. Sometimes they are bright and gay, at others dull and sad; in one place they run over rough stones, at another smooth pebbles, but they both roll side by side down the rock, into the cove, and there they join and run together into the sea."

"Like lovers," ejaculated Janey.

"Perhaps," sighed Jerusha. "But all who live are not lovers, though all must run their course through many dangers to the grave and eternity; you see, Janey, if we do not pass life with those we love best, we may be united in heaven."

"How solemn you are, Rushy!" said Janey, beginning to cry.

"What is the matter, Janey? I am grieved to have troubled you," exclaimed Jerusha. "Come and see Mark. He is tired of me already."

"I—I—am going away. I am—come—to say—good-bye," said Janey, in a choking voice.

Jerusha, perceiving that something was amiss, led Janey to a sequestered corner of the pond, where a decayed pollard-willow formed a natural seat, and where no one but the swans, which followed them thither, could see them. Here Janey, with downcast head, and hand in Jerusha's, told her tale; and here, hot-tempered, sympathetic Rushy burst forth in anger at Miss Martha, and pity for Janey. But common sense peeped in between the anger and pity, and she said,

"Well, Janey, you are only going home after all; and I daresay we shall often meet. Besides, your mother and little brothers and sisters must want you, and you owe them duty, you know."

"It—is—so—dull. And mother gets—

cross, and the children—won't mind me," sobbed Janey.

"That is your life-stream, perhaps, Janey. Don't fret against the big stones, but pass them by, or wear them down; the gentle water sometimes rubs them smooth, while the rough torrent only dashes over them, and makes no lasting impression."

"Is that how you do, Rushy?"

"Well, I try; but you know I have a quick temper. You, on the contrary, have, I should think, no temper at all. I am not sure that I like that, for the make-up after a quarrel is like the mill-wheel's rest after turning and grinding all day long."

"Yes. Aunt Martha is fonder of you than ever, Rushy, now you have made friends; and she is displeased with me, who try never to annoy her. I will be hasty and decided like you, then perhaps she will

love me, for she doesn't care for me as I am."

"Pray don't, Janey. Restraint is better than repentance. But come and see Mark; his temper is none of the sweetest just now, and if it were not for me he would be up and about, in spite of the doctor."

The two girls went together to the house. When they reached the parlour door they heard loud voices within, as if Mark and another were quarrelling. Mark's was the loudest, and had they been mean enough to listen, they could have overheard the conversation. Janey did pause with a "Hark, Rushy;" but Jerusha said, "This will never do," and opened the door. The words, "You won't be satisfied till you've ruined me," came from Mark as Jerusha entered, and a muttered curse from Captain Dangerfield. The latter rose as they ap-

peared, and with scowling face but honeyed manner, said Mark was exciting himself because he was endeavouring to persuade him against curing himself by a sea-voyage.

"You need not fear, Captain Dangerfield," said Jerusha, meeting the ominous eyes with a bright, resolute glance, "Mark will not move from that sofa until he has my permission; and everyone knows that I have a will of my own, if he has not."

"Will you lay your commands upon me also? I think you would find me the more tractable of the two," said Dangerfield, who was not without his weak point—an admiration for beauty and spirit.

"Certainly, if you will obey them," replied undaunted Jerusha. "You and Mark must not meet again until you have been your voyage and returned. Dr. Walsh says he still has fever, and I say it is sea-fever. He used to declare that he had hay-fever

when he wanted to join the crew of the *Sea Serpent* about haymaking time; but that is past, and the fever has broken out under a new name."

"Not scarlet fever, but blue fever," said Dangerfield. "Ha, ha, not a bad joke, Gay," turning to Mark. "I wish you would give it to me. Two such pretty nurses would make any fever endurable."

Mark was looking hot and angry, and Janey, in spite of Miss Martha, had stolen to his side.

"They and father have pulled me through," muttered Mark, "and I don't want to go back again."

"A long pull and a strong pull," laughed Dangerfield. "A very irresistible pull, apparently."

Jerusha had drawn a small table towards her, and quietly began to do some sewing, which lay in a basket upon it. She did not mean to leave Dangerfield and Mark alone.

Meanwhile Janey had managed to tell Mark of her intended departure. He was too much pre-occupied to be troubled by the information, and poor Janey was thus suddenly assured that her aunt was right, and that he did not really care for her. She restrained the ready tears with difficulty, and turned with a sort of shy pride from him to Jerusha, saying,

"I think I had better go now, Rushy. Aunt told me not to stay."

"I shall see you again before you leave, dear," said Jerusha. "But I must attend to Mark first."

Janey curtseyed to Dangerfield, and hastened away. She met Mr. Gay, bade him a hasty good-bye, and was soon standing alone on the bridge where she and Mark had once been hand-in-hand together.

CHAPTER XIV.

"HOW VERY, VERY KIND."

"IS that Mrs. Joe Hasluck's daughter?" asked Dangerfield, when Janey had departed. "She would be pretty if she had a little of your colour, Miss Gay. Sweet upon her, eh, Mark? or is she sweet on you?"

Jerusha did not like the compliment, or Mark the inquiry, so neither replied directly; but Jerusha put a pertinent question instead.

"Was not her father a friend of yours, Captain Dangerfield? My father often talks of you both."

"He was a neighbour. I never had any friends—indeed, I don't believe in them. We used to play together as boys. Joe Hasluck was a weak, unlucky fellow, and always his own enemy."

While Dangerfield was speaking Mr. Gay came in.

"He was indeed, captain," he said, catching the last sentence. "He ruined himself and his family by dabbling in the smuggling trade down Muchsandy way. I hear the Preventive men are on the look-out there again, and they tell me there's a revenue cutter not far off. I'm thankful that the Beachton folk keep out of mischief. Not a word against us."

It was these facts which had brought Dangerfield to see Mark. He had come to tell him of his interview with Firman the previous evening, and of his intention to keep the coastguardsmen on the scent down

below Muchsandy, if possible, while he landed his goods either at Hollow Cove or Beachton, as opportunity offered. He had assured Mark that the mill would be a capital hiding-place, and Levi a first-rate assistant, if the time of need should come; and it was this which had caused Mark to use the angry words which his sister had overheard. Dangerfield had spoken contemptuously of Firman as "a fledgling who could be easily netted," and whom he had already trapped by his pretended openness. He had also informed Mark that, when he had seen Firman and his men off his ground on one side, he had sent a watcher to the other to order the smugglers whom he had sent back, to return to the Grange with their burdens, which were safely housed in vaults unexplored by the lieutenant.

Captain Dangerfield had a keen love for his nefarious trade as a trade; whilst Mark

simply loved it for the daring and adventures it entailed. Dangerfield knew all the machinery at work along the southern coast of England, and had helped to perfect some of it. He only wished that he had been captain when he was cabin-boy, and smuggling was not on the decline, as now, thanks to coast-blockades and preventive service, established since his boyhood, when he had run away to sea. He was acquainted with the signals, caves, and subterranean communications that were employed to aid the smuggler by land and sea, and which, like many other clever underhand contrivances, deserved to be used in a better cause. And Mark was not the only man who, knowing better, had yielded to his tempting incitements to run the road to ruin. He had helped Janey's father on that insecure way as well.

"What takes Janey away from us so

soon?" asked the miller, seeing that Mark was unusually silent and sullen. "I could get nothing out of her, so I shall attack Miss Martha, who, I daresay, knows the reason."

"A bristling sort of a hedgehog, I should think; I would rather keep out of her way," said Dangerfield. "That sort of woman is as bad as a tornado."

"The very kindest, best-hearted woman in the whole world!" exclaimed Rushy enthusiastically, who always stood up for her friends when absent.

"I wish I were Miss Martha," said Dangerfield. "Would you defend me if anyone backbit me?"

Jerusha looked up from her work, and fixed her eyes steadily upon him. He felt the brightness of their fire, but could not return it.

"If you are brother's *true* friend, sir, I

shall not fail to defend you," she said, emphasizing the word *true*.

"Rushy, what will you say next? Of course he is my true friend," said Mark, angrily.

But Dangerfield rose to go. He did not like the suspicion implied in her words, though he longed to dispel it. This rough, bad man could assume a gentle manner and pleasing voice when he chose. He assumed them as he took leave of her, resisting all invitations to remain to tea.

"Of course I am his friend, Miss Jerusha, and shall expect you to keep your promise," he said, giving her hand a squeeze so hard that it belied the softness of his speech, and brought the blood to her cheeks.

When he had gone Mr. Gay asked his son what had brought him again to the mill. He was an unsuspicious man, yet he feared

lest Dangerfield's visits might revive Mark's taste for roving.

That "affliction" which "cometh not from the ground," had left its impress on Mark. Although he had kicked against it, certain lessons taught him by his mother, in childhood, and repeated to him both by precept and example ever since, had been running incessantly in his mind. One of these was never to tell a lie. Of late years he had often made excuses, which he tried to believe were not actually lies: but when on his sick-bed, these and multitudes of deceptions arose before him like so many haunting ghosts, and he was compelled to confess that he had sinned. He had made many good resolutions, and here was an opportunity to practise them. But he dared not criminate Dangerfield, Levi, and all the rest who were acting lies with him. He had taken the

first step into wrong-doing, and he had not the courage to withdraw. Therefore he was silent when his father spoke. Not so Jerusha. She knew that it would be unwise to irritate Mark, but having heard that speech of his when she entered the room, she could not hold her tongue.

"Captain Dangerfield is a cunning man, father; and I think he wants to entrap Mark to sea again, when his leg is strong enough. We must chain him to the mill-wheel."

"It seems to me that God has spoken to thee once, my son," said the miller, "and He means thee to stop at home; we cannot strive against Him. I thought He had put another plea for me and Rushy and the mill in thy path, in the shape of pretty Janey. Marry her, my boy, and settle down. Have you quarrelled, that she is

going to leave Miss Martha? She looked very downcast when I met her."

"Certainly not, father. But I am 'settled down' without Janey at present, and don't want a wife," replied Mark. "Rushy rules and manages for us all."

"You're not playing at 'fast and loose' with her?" said the miller, fixing his penetrating eyes on Mark.

"It is Miss Martha, and not Mark, who is sending Janey away," said Jerusha.

Mark was aroused by this assertion, but Jerusha did not think herself justified to betray Janey's innocent confidence, therefore gave no reasons. Indeed, she was inclined to agree with Miss Martha that Mark and Janey were in no wise suited, and that Janey would be best at home. Rushy's ideas of love and marriage were of too exalted a nature to let her second her father

as to the "settling down" he proposed. Beneath her sprightly manner and ready speech lay many unsounded depths of thought and tenderness, which caused her to know instinctively that something beyond a passing fancy, or mere personal admiration, was necessary to bind two souls together for union in this world and the next.

But the miller, like many a parent, had a notion that if Mark married he would be steady; and to keep this "apple of his eye" at home, was his one object. He therefore sought an interview with Miss Martha that very evening.

He found her alone, for Janey was slowly and disconsolately packing up.

"So pretty little Janey's going away!" he began. "You'll be sorry to lose her, Cousin Martha."

"Glad to be rid of her, rather. The young people of the present day are good

for nothing but fiddle-faddling. But what can one expect from the children of a couple of gallenies like Joe and Mary Anne? Never going for'ards, but always crying 'come back, come back,' till they ruined themselves. Janey's just like 'em; content to look smooth and pretty, and do nothing but play waltzes, as they call that improper new-fangled dance."

"Well, I must say I think she is very amiable, and very pretty," said Mr. Gay.

"I've no opinion of your amiable people, Cousin Martin. *You're* too amiable by half yourself. You spoil everybody, and everybody takes advantage of you. As to Mark——"

"It was about him I wished to speak to you, Cousin Martha—him and Janey," interrupted Mr Gay. "They seem to me to have a fancy for one another; would you object to their making a match of it?"

"I! What have I to do with it? I'm thankful that I'm not their mother and father. If I were I should as soon think of letting 'em marry as of tying up the wind to Dandy out yonder. People with a grain of common sense don't marry at all!"

"That is not the question. I am willing to take people as they are, common sense or none; and I should be glad to see Mark settled, and to have Janey for a daughter-in-law," said the miller, decidedly.

"Then, Cousin Gay, you must go to Mrs. Joe Hasluck for some one to agree with you, since I do not," returned Miss Martha, bluntly. "I have no doubt she will be as pleased as Punch to let Mark have Janey. But are you sure he wants her?"

This question puzzled the miller. "Well, I think so," he replied, rubbing his right ear.

"Then I do not. And I want him to understand that I've no more adopted Janey than I have Solomon, or any other of my nephews and nieces. Besides, I'm as likely to live to a hundred as old Polly Tuck, who is one hundred and one next month. What a mercy it would be if she was taken! And that's what they would say of me; for not a penny of money will they have till I have departed this life, so I'll warrant they want me gone already."

The miller laughed, and said that if one person did not make way for another the world would be too full. "Besides," he added, "it is not desirable to live for ever here. The flesh is a sad cumberer of the spirit, and one's earthly affections make one forget better and more enduring ones."

"I'm thankful to say mine don't," retorted Miss Martha, "and I'm willing to live as long

as ever I can; for I enjoy life. You see I have neither husband nor children to worrit health and happiness out of my bones, and when other people's offspring trouble me I pack 'em off. I don't mean to lose my flesh and temper for the fandangoes of fools."

"Then you mean to send pretty little Janey away. I'm sorry for that, for all our sakes."

"Yes, to-morrow. And I advise you to let her and Mark alone. They'll forget one another by the time she reaches Much-sandy."

"That is what I wish to avoid," said the puzzled miller.

Here Jerusha appeared to take leave of Janey, and Miss Martha told her that she would find her upstairs, whither she went. Janey was sitting on one small box, and looking despondingly into another. Her clothes were scattered round her, waiting to

be packed. Her hands were folded helplessly on her lap, and she was crying.

"This will never do, Janey," began Jerusha. "If you really want to come back again, you must show that you wish to please Cousin Martha; besides, red eyes and a red nose are sadly unbecoming. Just look at yourself, and smooth your hair, while I do your packing."

Janey meekly obeyed, and was much taken aback by the reflection of herself in the looking-glass.

"Well, I certainly do look a fright, Rushy!" she said, and forthwith went to her ewer, poured out some water, and began to sponge her eyes.

Jerusha had a message from Mark, which she scarcely liked to deliver, because she feared it might raise hopes in Janey's breast that might never be realised. Still she was too fair to withhold it, and when the ablu-

tions were completed, and the white cheeks dried from both salt and fresh water, she told her that her brother had sent her a farewell which was still not to be a farewell.

Jerusha was on her knees, packing, and Janey went to her with a "What—what did he say?"

When rosy, bright Jerusha glanced up from her task she met a look that almost alarmed her, it was so unnaturally vivid and anxious. Moreover, the taper fingers were clasped, and the pale lips ajar.

"He said he was going to Muchsandy as soon as he was able to move, and that he should hope to call and see your mother, and you, dear, also, of course, and the children," said Jerusha; but, perceiving the agitation caused by each word, she feared to give the remainder of the message, and paused.

"What more, Rushy darling, what more?" asked breathless Janey.

"He thanks you for having been so kind to him when he was ill, and is sorry you are going to leave. He was so much engaged with Captain Dangerfield when you left us that he could not say good-bye as he wished, and hopes to say it, and how d'ye do at the same time, when he is well enough to pay you a visit."

"Oh, Rushy!" exclaimed Janey, unclasping the fingers to shade her face with them, and turning aside to conceal the shamefacedness the words had caused; and in another moment her arms were round Jerusha's neck, and she was whispering, "How kind of you to come, dear! How kind of him! How very, very kind."

CHAPTER XV.

"MY LUVE IS LIKE THE RED, RED ROSE."

ONE morning in the following September Frank Firman was abroad in the twilight that precedes the dawn. He and his men had been very busy at Muchsandy and elsewhere since the encounter with Captain Dangerfield. They had been exposed by night and day, and had been engaged in some serious affrays with smugglers, confiscating both goods and liquors, receiving bounty-money in return, and making discoveries as regarded the fishermen and country people who abetted these natural opponents of the coastguard. On this par-

ticular morning Firman was alone above Hollow Cove. He was armed, and knew that one of the revenue vessels was anchored at no great distance behind some intervening rocks. This same vessel, the *Invincible*, had lately run down and captured a smuggling ship and several boats engaged in the traffic, and was on the look-out for more. Two or three fishing-boats were moored in the cove, aud a drift-net was lying in one of them, prepared for mackerel fishing. It was a misty morning, and Firman had some difficulty in distinguishing surrounding objects, so he seated himself on the cliff to await the sunrise. He was thus enabled to glance over the rocks that contained the cave. In due time a gleam or so of sunlight made its way through the mists, and he perceived that several fishermen were below in the cove. He could not distinguish clearly what they were about, but he saw

that they appeared and disappeared mysteriously up and down the rocks, and seemed to be stowing away something more than fishing-tackle in their boats. As Seagull's Nest was the usual spot for launching the boats belonging to its fishermen, this looked suspicious, and Firman resolved on an examination of the cove at low tide. Meanwhile he watched to see if the *Invincible* should make her appearance, but the boats put off in safety.

As it was impossible for Firman to reach the cove at high tide, he walked off towards Seagull's Nest. To his surprise he found Chivers's boat and two others there. He had marked these ever since the night of the accident, and had naturally supposed that they were the craft he had just seen at Hollow Cove. Walking up the road that led to the cottages, he met Chivers and some other men on their way to the boats.

They gave him a sulky "good morning," in return for his salutation, and passed him. The fishermen had a not unnatural dislike and suspicion of the preventive men, even when they were not smugglers; but when they were they hated them.

"He be on the scent. We must tell Measter Mark and Cap'en Dangerfield," growled Chivers, when he was out of hearing. "There be but one pleace more if the cave be vound out."

When Firman reached the downs the mists were dispersing, and he was able to use his telescope from time to time as he walked towards Beachton. He saw the boats in different directions, but the *Invincible* was still hidden from view.

"They are scudding along at a fine rate, and have not let down their nets, anyhow," he said, as he walked briskly on.

His attention was suddenly withdrawn

from the boats by the sight of a thick crop of mushrooms. He had not a mind above mushrooms, so he found himself wishing that he were seated at a good breakfast-table, with a dish of these dainties, well stewed, before him. He was a naturalist as well as coastguardsman, so he stooped to examine them. He knew that September was their favourite month, and that they loved the damp warm mists that were slowly dispersing before the sun: He also knew that many species of fungi accredited poisonous were not so; but these, at any rate, were wholesome, and he filled his pockets with them as he wandered on, stopping at intervals to use his telescope. While stooping to gather an especially fine mushroom, he perceived a figure at a little distance similarly employed. It was a woman, and she had a basket on her arm, into which she put her harvest as she plucked it. Fir-

man recognised Jerusha. He had again recourse to the deceitful little cough by which he had once before gained her attention. She glanced up and, in turn, recognised him. She came to meet him frankly and naturally. Her cheeks were as red as the rosy east that faced them, her voice cheerful as the lark's that rang in the sun-gilded mists above.

"What a glorious morning!" he exclaimed, as if her bright presence first made him conscious of the sunrise. "And what a basketful of mushrooms you have gathered!"

"Father likes them for breakfast, and if one doesn't gather them early they are not good. You know that they come up in a night, and are gone directly," she said. "You must have been up early, like the mushrooms, to be here at this hour."

"If I had not I should not have met you," he replied, gaily.

"'The early bird gets the early worm,'" laughed Jerusha.

"I shall not say with the naughty boy, 'More fool the worm for getting up so early,'" returned Firman.

They both laughed heartily, though they knew the joke was stale. Sunrise, and an exhilarating Autumn breeze, are the best incentives to mirth, and they were young, and had spirits as elastic as the turf they trod. Jerusha's basket was full, so she turned homewards. She knew that he was going the same way, and wished to walk with him; so they began the descent of the hill side by side. But they paused involuntarily as the sun burst forth in all his splendour above Golden Cap. This was the highest hill in the neighbourhood, and so-called from its robe of golden gorse, which it seemed never to take off. While this magnificent sight faced them, the re-

maining mists curled off, and disclosed the red and purple heather of the hill-side, and the ruby and amethyst hues of the eastern horizon.

"Does it not laugh and sing, as the Psalms say?" exclaimed Jerusha, her hand extended towards the hills and sea. "How glorious are Thy works, almighty God!"

Firman looked at her, and the laughing face was solemnised, the mischievous eyes serious. Then he followed her glance across the heaving sea. There they espied a boat being rapidly rowed athwart its breast by two men, and, at some distance from the boat, a vessel in full sail. Firman adjusted his telescope, and soon discovered that the vessel was the *Invincible*, and had no doubt that the boat was one of those which he had seen launched from Hollow Cove. Jerusha inquired the cause of his sudden excitement, and he explained. He gave

her a field-glass which he had in his pocket, and they walked to the edge of the cliffs to watch the chase. Firman understood what was going on, and told Jerusha that the *Invincible* had hoisted her flag, calling on the boat to surrender in the Queen's name; but that the boatmen were casting their nets, as if unaware of this fact.

"I hope they will escape!" cried Jerusha, fervently. "I don't believe they are smugglers."

In his heart Firman hoped so also, for the sympathies of the brave somehow go with the weak, and he scarcely cared to have received premiums himself in the service into which circumstances had placed him, for pouncing upon the poor fisherman.

"They will get off scot-free, I think," he said. "They are emptying the boat under cover of the net. Over goes one package —another—another! French brandy, with-

out doubt. How did the rascals get it? And they will know where to find it again by their sinkers, if we don't circumvent them."

"As if the sea were not rich enough already," said Jerusha. "The treasures of the deep need no additions. What will the fishermen do now?"

"Wait for the ship, and be searched, and let off. It must be one of the boats from Hollow Cove. The others have got clean away, and probably landed their cargo."

"From Hollow Cove? There are no smugglers there. They are all labourers or fishermen, and some of them work for us and Cousin Martha," said Jerusha, half offended, standing up for her friends.

"Is there a cave in that neighbourhood?" asked Firman, his glass still levelled at the boat.

"Not that I know of; but, yes; I think

there used to be one not far from Sandport, but nobody knows whereabouts it lies," replied Jerusha.

"Those adventurous spirits have found it out," returned Firman, watching until his prognostics had come to pass, and the boat lay alongside the ship.

But she was not taken. A few minutes sufficed to show, apparently, that she carried no smuggled goods; for she was quietly rowed off by her men, while the *Invincible* remained, defeated, if not convinced, in mid-ocean.

"I'm so glad! I knew there were no smugglers about us!" said Jerusha, triumphantly, as she and Firman resumed their path towards the mill, each thinking of the boat. "I should not like your profession, though I love the sea. But you can have had no breakfast, and this air makes us so hungry?" she added, as they neared her home. "You

must breakfast with us. Father will be delighted. If you will go round to the front while I hide my basket I will let you in. Father is very fond of stewed mushrooms for breakfast, and I want to surprise him. I know he will give you half."

Before Firman could answer she was tripping across the mill-dam. He stood to watch her. She turned, and, with a sort of unstudied coquetry, waved her hand towards the front of the house, and he went thitherward obediently, still watching her, and understanding that she had made this cunning *détour* to avoid meeting her father, who was already abroad.

"Then I shall get my mushrooms after all. I do nothing but eat when I come here. This will be my fourth meal, and I can never invite them in return. How fresh and sweet and natural she is! Like the red, red rose."

Thus mused Firman, oblivious of the *Invincible*, as he stood in the stone porch awaiting Jerusha; and we all know, or guess, the state of a man's mind when he so far forgets the prosaic side of life as to turn to the poetical for comparisons.

Rushy opened the door with her finger on her lip, and ushered him silently into the hall. Then she whispered,

"Sit down in that corner and surprise him. There is nothing father likes so much as a surprise, and some one to breakfast with him that he really cares about."

"Really cares about!" repeated Firman to himself, as she disappeared to stew her mushrooms.

He sat down in the chair indicated—one of those old-fashioned beehive chairs—and, as was natural, thought of her. His thoughts were not always so pleasant, for his life was hard, and not what he would have chosen

had he picked out a path for himself. The road appointed for us rarely does appear exactly the one we should have selected had we followed our fancy; still, if we pursue it honestly and steadily, it will prove the right one at the last. But this thought of Rushy apparently smoothed his for the moment; for, meditating on her bright face and charming manners, he fell asleep. Those who serve their country as Government watchers—be they of coastguard, police, or fire brigade—make great sacrifices, none greater than the loss of regular rest. Firman's had been much broken of late, and he was prepared to seize it irregularly, even without a minute's notice.

"How tired he must be! And no wonder! I wish he were anything but a coastguardsman?" thought Jerusha, when she returned and saw that he was asleep. "I will take care not to awaken him. I

wonder if he has anyone in the world to care for him. He doesn't mind Thomas Fudgit as Mark did when he was ill."

Her hands were noiseless as a cat's velvet paws as she spread the clean table-cloth and laid the breakfast, and Tilly was kept mysteriously in the background while she did the work.

When the miller came in he was much surprised and delighted, as Jerusha had expected, at the sight of his guest and the odour of his mushrooms, and he unceremoniously aroused Firman, who started up with many apologies. The trio were soon seated at the cheerful table.

"I am as glad to see you as if you were my own son," said Mr. Gay. "Mark has gone for a change to stay with Solomon Hasluck, and we are lost without him. He is nearly well, I am thankful to say."

Firman thought, on the contrary, that

Mark's absence was a gain. He misdoubted him, although he knew nothing of his habits, and did not even suspect him of illegal practices.

Jerusha recounted to her father what she and Firman had just seen, and the miller said he wished smuggling could be entirely put down, since it was contrary to the laws of God and man, and enlisted sympathy on the wrong side.

During the meal Firman inquired if there were any comfortable lodgings at Woolley-sheepfold, adding that his mother was desirous of being with or near him. Father and daughter were immediately interested, and offered to make inquiries.

"My mother is not rich," said Firman. "Indeed, we are poor, and could not afford anything expensive. But we are not ashamed of poverty."

"Right! right! Suppose you bring her

here first, and let her choose for herself," said hearty Mr. Gay. "What do you say, Rushy? She might have the parlour and the best bed-room for a few weeks. I mean as a visitor, of course; but we needn't interfere with her. She would then be able to look about her."

"I should be very glad, father, but perhaps Mrs. Firman might not like it," replied Jerusha, with a ready perception of the doubtful nature of the proposal.

"Thank you with all my heart," said the lieutenant, looking from one to the other as he rose to go. "I will write to my mother and tell her what kind and hospitable friends I have made. We have never met with such before, and we have been knocked about a great deal. But I hear, on all sides, that there are not many Mr. Gays, and I believe it."

CHAPTER XVI.

IS JERUSHA JEALOUS?

JERUSHA pondered much over her father's invitation to Mrs. Firman. Her mind was continually running on the possibility of its acceptance, and on how she would receive that lady if she came. She did not like strangers, but her imagination, which was fertile, readily made a friend of the mother of one so charming as the lieutenant. She began to fancy that any person belonging to him must be agreeable, and hoped that she might have an opportunity of showing her appreciation of him through his parent. Some weeks elapsed, however,

and she heard nothing of either. Her father had evidently forgotten the invitation altogether, and she was trying to forget both it and Firman, when her efforts were rendered temporarily successful by an unexpected announcement.

A letter arrived from Mark, with the astonishing news that he was going to be married to Janey. The sudden shock was great both to Jerusha and her father, and neither could tell at first whether it was pleasurable or painful; but the miller soon showed that he found it electrically beneficial, for he rubbed his hands lustily, and exclaimed,

"Now he will be steady, Rushy! Now he will stop at home, and give up seafaring! Now I shall die in peace!"

"Ah, father, but are they suited, and where can they live?" was Jerusha's cooler reception of the intelligence, as she

thought of what such a match must entail.

"Let us read the letter," said the miller, putting on his spectacles, and spreading two sheets of well-filled paper on the table before him.

Mark had never before written so long a letter, and it caused much speculation in Jerusha's mind, quite enough to supersede that concerning the lieutenant and his mother. Mr. Gay read it aloud, slowly and without comment, and she perceived that he was obliged to take off his glasses more than once to clear them of the moisture gathered by his tears. It was like its writer, full of good intentions, and contained the assurance that the intended marriage was as much to please his father as himself, and as Mr. Gay knew that he had proposed it, that could not be gainsaid. Then Mark expatiated on Janey's amiability and prettiness, which was equally true, and on the fact

that her mother, who was quite a lady, gave her consent readily. He had no doubt but that Miss Martha would come down handsomely now that he had proved his love, which she had seemed to doubt, and that he was convinced Janey would be an excellent daughter-in-law. He wished the marriage to take place at once, as he was desirous of getting through the whole thing while he was still held by the leg, thereby implying that he was not sure of what his inclinations might be when he was restored to his usual activity. It was, indeed, the accident which had done the business. He made no suggestion as to where or how he was to live, taking it for granted, apparently, that his father would settle those matters, and that house, food, and such sublunary substances, would be prepared by magic. Still it was a more thoughtful letter than harum-scarum Mark had ever before

written, and clear-sighted Jerusha perceived that he was at least in earnest. She had previously wondered whether love for Janey had been at the bottom of his visit to Solomon Hasluck, since she knew that he was not attached to his host, and now she was convinced of it. So far, so good, she thought; and he had made the best of his time. But what of the future?

"It is quite impossible they can marry at once," she said, looking rather ruefully at her father's joyful face.

"Why not?" he asked, sharply for him.

"Where are they to live, father?"

"Here, of course, till we can furbish up some place for them. The dairy-house might be made into a comfortable dwelling, or, maybe, Cousin Martha would do up the old farm."

"That would take a year at least. Had they not better wait till it is ready?"

"Waiting is wanting. Long courtship, short marriage, or no marriage at all. I married your blessed mother a month or so after we got engaged."

"But you were settled and well-to-do, father."

"So is Mark, or he will be. Art jealous, lass, because thee art not going to be married thyself?"

"Not exactly, father, but I think I must now accept Cousin Solomon. We shall be too full here. There will be Mrs. Joe and the children coming and going for ever, and you have invited Lieutenant Firman's mother."

"Thy 'fancy man,' Rushy? But she won't come; and if she does it will only be for a week or so."

The miller pinched Rushy's cheek, and then rubbed up his ear. But she was quite in earnest. She looked beyond the present,

and figured to herself pale, delicate, helpless Janey dawdling about the mill as she had dawdled about the villa, and Mark again tired of home-life. She tried to banish selfishness from her soul, a vice she hated. Still these and similar thoughts rushed in like torrents, and it seemed to her that the peace she loved would be destroyed for ever if her father's plans were carried out. And he was prepared to improvise more. He even proposed to give up one or two of the mill store-rooms, or to build an additional small wing to the house—to do anything, in short, to expedite and facilitate Mark's marriage. But still Jerusha said they must wait.

They were startled from their discussion by a tap at the window. It was Miss Martha. She came in with a letter in her hand, and the words,

"I suppose you've heard the news too!

I see you have. Idiots! Running, borisnoris into the ditch, without a thought of the morrow, Mrs. Joe the greatest fool of the three. But she's more rogue than fool. You'll forbid the banns, Cousin Martin."

"Why? You see he did want her, Miss Martha," replied the miller, sarcastically.

"Want her, indeed! And what will he do with her when he gets her? A footy, taffety lass, like a gookoo flower. And Mary Ann writes just as if I was to be as much pleased as she, and invites me to the wedding, as much as to say 'Get your present of silver spoons ready.' They'll neither get me nor my present, I can tell 'em."

"I don't see why you should be so put about, Miss Martha," said the miller, stiffly; "I daresay they can do without your present. And for silver spoons, I have ample for both my children."

"I'm aware of that, and Mark and Janey

will soon make ducks and drakes of 'em when you're gone. But it's no business of mine. If you like the match, that's your affair. Rushy don't look as if she liked it."

"Well, Miss Martha," said Jerusha, with spirit, rebelling at that lady's authoritative tone, as she always did, "if they are in love with one another, I suppose it is right they should marry. Only I think they might wait a little, for convenience sake. You remember that you told me a girl should be bound by Act of Parliament to marry the first man that asked her. This is Janey's first offer. What have you to say to that?"

"That if Janey marries Mark you must marry Solomon," replied Miss Martha, knocking the table.

"And what of Captain Bowles, Miss Martha?" asked Jerusha, the wicked twinkle returning to her eye.

"He is mortally offended with me, and has given me up, just because I didn't ask him in that night when I saw Mark and Janey fiddle-faddling, and told her she must go home."

Miss Martha subsided by degrees after this turn was given to her indignation, and consented to discuss the projected marriage. But she did not change her mind concerning it. She was of opinion that Janey's mother had hurried it on, not believing in Mark's disinterestedness. She knew him well, and, like Jerusha, foreboded evil from so hasty a match.

However, Mark had compromised himself, and Janey was only too willing to abet him, while the mother was evidently well pleased at her making what she considered a wealthy match. Mark was as well-educated as Janey, and there were, in her

opinion, no further obstacles. This she had said in her letter.

"I will go down and talk it over with Mrs. Joe," said the miller. "I can bring Mark back, and then, Rushy, you and he can discuss the house, and the rest of it."

Jerusha knew what that meant, and that Mark would have it all his own way. However, there was nothing else to be done, and the three disputants remained at the end of their conversation much of the same opinion as they were at the beginning.

Just as Miss Martha was about to leave, another complication arose in a visit from Frank Firman. Mr. Gay and Miss Martha both glanced instinctively at Rushy, whose colour heightened. Firman apologised for again intruding, but said he had called to inquire concerning some lodgings in Woolley-

sheepfold, which he had seen, and which he fancied might suit his mother. There was nothing fitting for her at Muchsandy, the village being poor and wild; neither could she reside with comfort in his desolate abode; but Woolleysheepfold was a pretty, picturesque, sheltered place, where he thought she might be happy. He looked at Jerusha as he spoke.

Miss Martha replied for her. "I don't think the apartments you have seen could suit any lady," she said, "as the woman of the house knows as much about cooking and waiting as the present company of suitable marriages." Firman looked inquiringly from one to the other.

"My son is thinking of getting married, and Miss Martha disapproves," Mr. Gay explained. "When does your mother want lodgings? I know an old lady who might be glad to have some one to share her

house, and whose terms would be reasonable."

"My mother writes to say she is coming soon," replied perplexed Firman. "She fancies I have only to seek and find. She has been accustomed to move from place to place, and has found no difficulty hitherto; but these country neighbourhoods are different from what she has been used to."

"I said we should be very glad to see her here till she can suit herself," said the kindly miller. "It does one's heart good to see a young man so anxious about his mother. They are too apt to be ashamed of filial duty, or to shirk it anyhow."

"If Mark marries on Friday, and brings his bride home on Saturday, I don't see how you can accommodate anyone else," remarked matter-of-fact Miss Martha. "There won't be a corner for a mouse. If you'll leave it to me I'll find a suitable place for

your mother," she continued, addressing Firman; "I know every man, woman, and child, dog and cat in Woolleysheepfold, and not one of 'em would dare to impose on me. Come with me, and I'll drive you there at once, and take you to a house or two where a respectable lodger would be a help, and where your mother might count upon decent cooking and attendance. I daresay at her time of life she agrees with me in thinking a well-cooked meal the cream of the day. Good cooking, or bread-and-cheese for me."

"My last well-cooked meal consisted of stewed mushrooms," said Firman, laughing, "so I have had no cream in my days for a fortnight at least."

Jerusha lived before there were "schools of cookery," and perhaps felt the compliment all the more because her knowledge of the art was either intuitive, or acquired

from her mother's cookery-book. But her tell-tale face showed displeasure, and Firman feared he had annoyed her by alluding to culinary matters in company. Her annoyance, however, proceeded from a different source. She did not see what right Miss Martha had to carry off their guest, and take upon herself an office her father had volunteered to fill. She did not acknowledge to herself that she had been improvising many ways of entertaining Firman's mother, and probably him also, occasionally, but she did dislike being interfered with. It must be confessed that Miss Martha had a natural love of management, and did marshal off Firman, with much delight at the prospect of helping some neighbour poorer than herself to a lodger. Firman was in a strait, and turned, half apologetically, half gratefully, from the miller to Miss Martha; but the former settled the matter by assuring him

that the ladies were always the best hands in such cases, and he left all to them.

Jerusha was soon alone, and able to meditate on the events of the day. Her temporary chagrin vanished shortly in graver thoughts of what appeared likely to befall her. She could not look hopefully on Mark's marriage, and, above all, she could not rejoice in the prospect of having her happy peaceful reign disturbed. She even shed tears as she thought of another sharing it and her dear father's love. But she dashed them away impetuously with the words,

"Was father right? Am I jealous of poor Janey? Am I even envious of Miss Martha? May the dear Lord preserve me from such folly, and give me a better heart!"

Before the day was over, she wrote a long letter to Mark, containing much good

advice, which, nevertheless, she knew would be disregarded. Still she discharged what she believed to be her duty, by entreating him not to be hasty in a matter which involved the comfort and happiness, not only of himself but others. She asked him to wait awhile before he married, until he could provide a suitable home for Janey, and to consult Miss Martha, who might help them if they sought to interest her. She mingled many good wishes with her counsel, but found it very difficult to add congratulations.

"But what does it matter?" she thought. "I may as well hold my pen. Mark will do what he pleases, and Janey what pleases him, and they have father to back them. Still, as I have written my letter it may as well go, and if they marry, we must all make the best of it."

And so the letter went.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE EVE OF THE WEDDING.

JERUSHA was right in her judgment: Mark had his way, and his marriage was settled according to his wishes. He easily prevailed on Janey and her mother to have the wedding in October, so what with one arrangement and another, there was scarcely breathing time, and certainly none for reflection. Jerusha managed with some difficulty to be with Janey on the eve of the day, at her earnest entreaty. She knew little of her mother, and had never been at their abode before. It was called Kimberlin Cottage, and she found it

much what she expected from Janey's manners and capabilities, for she was a shrewd reader of character, and an observer. There was the same air of languid gentility about Mrs. Joe Hasluck and her house as there was about Janey, only they were not so pretty. The piano to which Miss Martha had taken exception, was a distinguishing mark of this gentility; for that instrument was not as universally cumbersome then as now. Mrs. Hasluck was much such a musician as her daughter, and they played easy duets together on company occasions, and were accounted accomplished by their neighbours.

Their two small sitting-rooms were adorned by a variety of third-class ornaments, while the furniture was shabby and, to Jerusha's sorrow, much streaked with dust. That careful house-wife liked to see all the dust removed, and she augured ill

for the neatness of Mark's homestead when he had one of his own.

Mrs. Hasluck had been, unfortunately for herself and others, an heiress in a small way. She was the daughter of a former medical man of Muchsandy, and had fallen to the lot of good-looking Joe Hasluck after her father's death. Her husband had spent all of her fortune that was in her own power, and she and her children existed somehow, to the astonishment of their friends, on the remainder. How she had managed to send Janey to school was a wonder to everyone, and how she intended to bring up her other wild, riotous offspring was equally incomprehensible to the general capacity.

Kimberlin Cottage had formerly belonged to the Dangerfields, but was now in the possession of Solomon Hasluck, who had contrived to buy up most of the land sold at intervals by that reckless family. Janey and

Solomon were first cousins, their respective fathers having been half-brothers; Solomon and his uncle Joe were, nevertheless, much of an age, and had been playfellows, while Mrs. Joe was the youngest of the three. She did not find her affectionate nephew a liberal landlord, for he was in the habit of pointing out to her the duty of "owing no man anything," when she was behindhand with her rent, suppressing the remainder of the text, "but to love one another," feeling that no love was lost between them. The cottage was neither picturesque nor romantic in itself, but it was wildly situated. It stood on an eminence that overlooked Dangerfield Grange and the village of Muchsandy, beyond which were the sand wastes and the sea. From its windows Mark had been able to watch the distant vessels, and was thankful to know that the *Sea Serpent* had not appeared amongst them. Indeed, the

vigilance of the coastguard by sea and land had rendered the landing of smuggled goods difficult of late. Firman was becoming noted for resolution in the discharge of his duty, and was also gaining a reputation for penetration in distinguishing the actual, daring, professional smuggler from the country-folk who were led by their imaginary grievances into selling smuggled goods.

Jerusha was such a stay-at-home that she had seldom visited Muchsandy, and had never seen its new coastguard station. She looked with interest at the small portion of it visible from Kimberlin Cottage, and wondered which tenement Firman inhabited, though it was too far off to distinguish clearly one portion of it from another.

But she had not much time for wonder during the few hours she passed at the cottage before the wedding. Her father drove her thither, and it was afternoon when

they arrived, for the roads between Beachton and Muchsandy were hilly, and so bad at intervals that the wheels of the gig stuck in the mud more than once. She had found Janey anxiously expecting her, and looking very glad, but very shy. She and her mother were in a sort of hopeless chaos of preparation, and Jerusha was not long before she found her aid not only necessary, but expected. She gave it willingly, and the chaos soon became order under her accustomed touch. Not that there was much to do at the cottage, since Mr. Solomon Hasluck, to the universal surprise, had insisted on giving the wedding feast at his house. Still the family party were to sup there that evening, the supper was not ready, and the children's wedding suits were not yet perfected.

Jerusha had been in a whirl ever since the arrival of Mark's letter announcing his

engagement; she was so still. Her natural spirits seemed to have deserted her, and she lived in a sort of dream. It was, nevertheless, an active dream, for she helped Mrs. Hasluck—who was Janey over again—to prepare the supper below-stairs, and a young dressmaker to rig out the expectant children above.

Eight o'clock brought Mr. Gay, Mr. Solomon Hasluck, and Mark to supper. Jerusha's heart was with her brother, and she was glad to see that he looked really happy as he sat beside his drooping lily of a bride-elect. Of course, Solomon fell to her share, and her father to the widow, so they were all "paired, if not matched." The miller was in great spirits, and assured Mrs. Joe over and over again that he already looked on Janey as his own child. Indeed, the party was cheerful enough, and rendered almost uproarious by the presence of the

five other children at a side-table. They had, however, a wholesome dread of Cousin Solomon, and were checked in their mirth from time to time by a disapproving glance or word from him. He devoted himself to Jerusha, who tried to look favourably upon him in return for his promised liberal hospitality on the morrow. She also did her best to be cheerful; but, when once depressed, she was hard to rouse. It is often so with bright, spirited natures. The rose, weighted with heavy raindrops, does not readily uplift her head.

"Did you bring no message from Martha?" asked Mrs. Hasluck, when the roast fowls and ham were carved, and the children's mouths too full to talk.

"None," replied the miller. "She always takes time to come round to a thing, and she is busy just now; she has been helping Lieutenant Firman to get lodgings for his

mother, and the good lady arrived before they were settled, so Cousin Martha, with her usual kindness, took her in at the Villa."

"What, that good-looking young man at the coastguard station?" asked Mrs. Hasluck, whose personal grievances were always dispelled by a piece of news. "What is she like? Will she pay, I wonder? I suppose she's a lady by birth."

"She only came the day before yesterday, and we haven't seen her. We've been too busy," returned the miller, with a knowing look at Janey.

"Cousin Martha isn't worth thinking about," cried Mark, hotly, who was more annoyed than he chose to confess at her refusal to countenance the marriage, either by present or presence. "Old maids are jealous old cats, who don't like marriages because they have failed to get spliced them-

selves. Rushy will be ditto, if she don't take care. I believe she only took this Mrs. Firman in for an excuse."

"Her son is a good officer, anyhow," said Solomon, "and he has had a sight of prize-money already for seizing smuggled goods down the coast, and his men have had their share."

Jerusha awoke from her dream, and found her powers of listening revive. But Mark's joyous face darkened, for he was suspicious of Firman.

"He thinks himself mighty clever," he said, sulkily, "and is as greedy as a shark."

"He was a good friend to thee, my son," put in the miller. "If he had not found thee on the cliff, matters might have been worse than they are, and thee lamed for life. Then pretty Jancy would have turned up her nose at a lame dog."

Janey glanced up reproachfully, as much as to say that Mark would always have been Mark to her.

When the supper was cleared away, and the children had gone to bed, the six friends drew round the fire. Mark managed so to place himself that his arm should encircle Janey's slender waist; and, but for Jerusha's good management, Solomon would have followed his example, for he had, as we know, little experience of the proprieties. But Jerusha had seated herself between her father and the wall, so that it was impossible for Solomon to approach her. Not that she was thinking much of him; her thoughts and speculations were with the happy pair opposite. She no longer doubted Mark's love for Janey, for it showed itself in every look and movement; and as for Janey's for him, that had long been open enough. She prayed inwardly that they might be blessed

in one another, and strove to forget self, which she found very difficult.

The little party were startled by a loud knock at the door. Mrs. Hasluck's small maid-of-all-work answered it, and immediately afterwards brought in a letter for Mark. He read it, and his countenance changed from bright to dark.

Throwing the letter into the fire he rose hastily, and went to speak to the messenger who had brought it, and who was, apparently, a fisherman.

"Tell him I will come," he said, and returned to his friends.

The joy had gone out of his face, and they all wondered what was the matter. With the exception of Jerusha, however, they accepted his explanation, and all expressed regret.

"An old shipmate has turned up," he said, hurriedly. "I can't refuse to go and

see him. Don't stop up for me, Solomon, as I am sure to be late. It is very provoking, but it can't be helped." Then he bent over Janey, kissed her, and whispered, "Only half an hour less, my love. To-morrow at eleven!"

A slight pink tinged her pale cheek, and a happy smile moved her lips as she gently returned the pressure of his hand, but did not speak. She was timid and modest as ever, and did not presume on her engagement. It was no wonder she had won fickle Mark's heart.

After he was gone, the rest separated. Jerusha shared Janey's room, so the customary conversation ensued between them touching the wedding-dress and the ceremony. Janey had perfect faith in Mark, so his absence on the eve of the wedding did not trouble her. Not so Jerusha. It was with difficulty she could enter into Janey's

innocent talk, and examine the dress and presents scattered somewhat untidily about the room. Having done so, however, she persuaded Janey to go to bed, by assuring her that she would want her best looks and all her energy on the morrow. Janey's head was scarcely on her pillow before she slept, like the happy child she really was.

Jerusha was too restless to follow her example. She was long on her knees, praying for those she loved, especially for Mark and Janey; then she instinctively went to the window, as she was in the habit of doing at home. She did not venture to unclose it that cold October night on Janey's account, but she sat down on the window-seat, having first extinguished the light. Below her was the sombre Grange, with its yews and poplars; on the left, the cliffs upon which the coastguard station stood; on the right, and far beyond, Much-

sandy and the sea; but all these objects were dark, distant, and almost undistinguishable. Still she gazed down upon them, lost in thought, while Jancy slumbered, lost in dreams.

There are people who make the griefs and anxieties of others so entirely their own that, while to all appearance personally untroubled, they suffer indescribably. Jerusha was one of them. The dark, shadowy outline of rock on her left brought Firman to her mind in addition to Mark, and with him, his mother, who was already reputed poor and proud, though no one but Miss Martha had seen her. She wondered where, in that gloomy landscape, Mark and Firman were at that moment, and how the one would support a wife, the other, possibly, a mother.

She was thus wondering, when her attention was riveted on a spot near the

Grange. A light suddenly shone and disappeared, and then another, and another. They were like meteors, or a child's fireworks, that flashed a moment, and vanished. She could not resist opening the window, and straining out, as if to examine the depths of obscurity below. She fancied she heard the report of a pistol as one more flash, or meteoric delusion, gleamed. Then all was dark and silent as before. She waited a few seconds, then re-closed the window, feeling thankful that she did not live in so dreary and weird a scene.

But she slept little that night, for thinking of those she loved.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOLOMON IN TROUBLE.

THE flash which Jerusha saw from her window at Kimberlin Cottage was caused by a pistol-shot fired by Captain Dangerfield at Lieutenant Firman.

A darker and wilder scene than even Jerusha's vivid imagination called up was enacting near the Grange.

Mark and Dangerfield were standing together, concealed and sheltered by the yew hedge and poplar grove, while Firman and his Preventive men were surrounding what appeared to be a waggon-load of coal, and a couple of carters in smock frocks. A

few minutes before all had been silent as night herself; no sounds heard but the mysterious moanings of distant ocean, and the melancholy whisperings of the winds amongst the ghostly poplars. Now, that first dastardly shot levelled at a venture, was returned by others, equally uncertain. They ceased, however, at a word of command, and lights were kindled in order to discover if anyone had fallen, as well as to enable Her Majesty's servants to proceed with their duty. Dangerfield and Mark withdrew further into their ambuscade, which was too impenetrable a labyrinth either for bullet or cutlass.

"I hope I have killed him," whispered Dangerfield. "They believe me with my ship, and will never suspect me."

"Coward!" ejaculated Mark, irresistibly, "to shoot at a man in the dark, and from behind a hedge."

"Hold your maundering. They're unloading, by ——!" whispered Dangerfield, seizing Mark by the throat. "The waggon's double S's on its way to Hill Farm, and he must pay the penalty."

"Scoundrel!" was on Mark's lips, but Dangerfield's grip fortunately stayed its enunciation.

Mark had only, as yet, been engaged in the daring and exciting purchase and barter of smuggled goods, the evasion of the Excise, and hazards by sea and land, hitherto successfully surmounted; he had never been in an encounter where life was in peril, and had not realised what it would be. He was no coward, yet he trembled for the consequences. What if they were all taken prisoners, found guilty, imprisoned, banished? What would become of Janey?—what would his father and Jerusha say?

"Milk-and-water fool!" muttered Danger

field, releasing him, and moving stealthily nearer the scene of action under cover of the hedge, pistol in hand.

His first shot at the shadowy figure of Firman had missed, thanks to the darkness. Should he hazard a second? Some of the men were, so to say, already beating the bushes for its perpetrator; but the captain was cunning, and well accustomed to evade both law and pursuit. Moreover, he hated Firman.

The lieutenant, meanwhile, was watching the unloading of the waggon in the Queen's name, although her youthful Majesty was not aware of it. As he suspected, when the coal was removed by the carters, aided by the Preventive men, the waggon was found to be full of kegs of spirits. The surprise of the smock-frocked countrymen was greater than that of the Queen's servants, who expected what they found.

"Lawk a massy, who'd a-thought it!" exclaimed one. "Kags, as I'm a sinner!"

"Avore I'd a coom wi' it I'd a-cut my lags off!" cried the other.

"Whose men are you?" asked Firman.

"Measter Hasluck's, zur," was the reply.

"And the waggon is his?"

"Iz zure, zur. Measter do let un out, but I'll teak my woth that hem doan't knaw no more about thay kags than the onborn biabe, no more nor we do, zur, and we duno nothin' at all."

"He will have to speak to that as well as you. Where were you going?"

"We wor to be met an' tuold hereabouts, zur. We thought as the coäl wor vor Squire Dangervield's bealiff, and as he 'ould be here vor to zee to un."

"You live at Mr. Hasluck's?"

"Iz zure, zur; we be hes carters."

"Then you had better take the horses

home. Give me your names first; we will see to the waggon. The contents belong to the Queen."

"An' the coäl, zur? An' Winter a-coomin', and virin' zoo scarce. The Queen, God bless her, 'ont be wanten' the coäl."

"I daresay the magistrates will settle that; but the horses are tired, and not guilty, whoever else is."

Firman gave two of his men orders to accompany the carters, and others to keep watch over the waggon; but these orders being given apart, did not reach the watchers in the hedge. They had heard the rest of the colloquy. They knew that the smuggled goods were to have been deposited in the Grange, had they not been so unexpectedly surprised; and it was to undertake the management of this that Dangerfield had summoned Mark. One of Dangerfield's men was to have met the waggon, and told

the carters to leave it at the Grange until the morning, themselves returning with the horses to Hill Farm. As one of the carters had said, Solomon Hasluck was in the habit of letting out his waggon and horses when his harvest was in, thereby turning, as he believed, an honest penny. He thus frequently brought coal or lime to the Grange, never pausing to ask why that ruinous dwelling needed it; and if he suspected that his waggon or cart contained other than lawful load he did not breathe it, even to himself. The acquisition of wealth was pleasant to him, and he had no intention of making it dishonestly. He resolved to obtain it, just as he was determined to gain Jerusha, by his indomitable will. He almost said, with the Quaker, "Get money, my son; honestly if you can, but by all means get money."

While this was passing, Mark's frame of

mind was not enviable. Although he was not directly implicated in this particular seizure, he knew that Solomon would be, who suspected him of complicity with Dangerfield, and who had lent money on their joint security. He still thought of Janey, of his marriage, of his father, and Rushy. What if his part in Dangerfield's crimes should evolve on the very eve of his wedding? He turned to Dangerfield in desperation, and whispered, "I will have no more to do with it. I wash my hands of the whole affair. I break with you henceforth, and turn over a new leaf."

"You can't," replied the Captain, with an oath. "We must stand or fall together, as we have bought and sold, made voyages, given pledges, borrowed money, and signed our names together. Better come with me to the *Sea Serpent*. I shall be safe in her, and off to sea in three or four hours."

"I am to be married to-morrow," said Mark, in despair.

"More fool you! But you're not spliced yet; and we're not found out yet. And I don't mean to be. Ah, come along! There's some one inside the garden, and they'll be upon us directly."

Dangerfield's practised ears were conscious of a footstep. He seized Mark's arm and dragged him along beneath the thick hedge, until they were in the shrubbery before the house. He told Mark to creep on all-fours, and they dodged in and out of the overgrown laurels and cypresses until they succeeded in reaching the door. A latch-key soon let them in, but they could not tell whether they had been observed or not. The night, although dark, was not pitch-dark, and it was impossible to know what discoveries might have been made by

means of lanterns, and keen accustomed sight such as Firman's.

Once within the house they were safe. They hurried quickly through the passages, offices, and cellars, which Dangerfield, on a previous occasion, had shown Firman, until they reached a secret and concealed door, that he had not considered it necessary to discover to the lieutenant. This was opened by a spring, and when once on the other side, they feared no pursuit. Here smugglers were anxiously awaiting orders; and their language was as bad as their looks, when they were informed that the load which they were to have stowed away in the secret passages which they then tenanted had been snatched from them by the Preventive men. Mark stood in a kind of wretched dream, listening to Dangerfield's plans, and commands to cut through the

Preventive men if necessary, and expecting his orders next.

Meanwhile Firman was considering in what way he could most conscientiously yet mercifully do his duty. He knew that Mark was to be married that very day, and that the wedding party was to adjourn to Mr. Hasluck's, so he determined that no further proceedings should be taken, at least until the event was over. Whatever were his private opinions concerning the ownership of the smuggled spirits, they were found in Solomon's waggon, and conveyed by his carters, so it was he who must answer for them.

"What trouble this drink entails!" he thought, as he surveyed the captured spirits. "Life, reputation, fortune, all risked, for what, after all, only 'steals away one's brains.' Blame falling on the innocent, while the guilty escapes; lies, hypocrisy,

murder even, and for what? for that which converts the 'image of God' into the tabernacle for demons. But for His grace, perhaps, such might this my temple be, and I a miserable wreck on life's shore."

"Now, my men," he exclaimed aloud, "let us take warning, and avoid this enemy of our souls as we would the pit of destruction itself."

"Lo'k zee, zur," said one of the carters, "we doan't drink nothin' but zider, or maybe a drop o' elder wine wi' a vew snags in it, as our missus do make vor the colic, and which do warm oone up when oone's cold."

"Perhaps you may take too much of that, even," returned Firman smiling, as he watched the shadowy horses and men wend their way carefully through the darkness towards Hill Farm.

Solomon Hasluck was awaiting them. When he returned home from Kimberlin

Cottage and found that they and Mark were still absent, he resolved to sit up awhile. He did so in a comfortable arm-chair in a snug dining-room, and was soon dozing, and dreaming of Jerusha. He was resolved to make sure of her on the morrow, for "one wedding makes many," he facetiously thought.

The arrival of his team and men aroused him from this agreeable slumber, and he went forth to his yard, bent on lecturing his labourers for being so late. He was startled at sight of the coastguardsmen, and still more so when he perceived the absence of his waggon. His lecture was cut short by the announcement that the vehicle in question had been detained with its illicit load. His speech was measured at best, but now he found it fail altogether. He could only lift up his eyes and hands in angry protest. When words did come, however, they

were anything but measured, and his temper anything but restrained.

"I, Solomon Hasluck of Hill Farm, a smuggler!" he exclaimed. "I'll have every soul up before the magistrates who dares to say so! My waggon! my horses! my—my—— What do you mean by it, Phil Hallet and Jack Little? Where have you been? What have you been doing? Neglecting your business at the ale-house, I warrant."

"We dun no nothen' about it, measter. They loaded 'un while they wur treaten' ov' us, and our backs wur turned. It bain't our vault."

"What business had you to be treated? Put up the horses, and come with me to the Grange. It is all a mistake! I'll have the police—the—the—sheriff's officer—the——"

But the coastguardsmen assured him it

was no mistake. He took them into the dining-room to question them, and they gave him an account of the seizure, and of the shot fired near Dangerfield Grange.

He said, what was quite true, that he had lent his cart and horses to Captain Dangerfield's so-called bailiff to bring a waggon-load of coal from some vessel down the coast, and was to receive payment for the loan. He had often done the same before.

The coastguardsmen did not confute him, but knew, nevertheless, that the waggon and consequent penalty were his, and that he would have to appear before a magistrate when a summons was taken out against him, and account, as best he might, for his contraband load.

He calmed a little and changed his mind as to his visit to the Grange; told the men he could easily clear himself and his carters, and that he would call on Lieutenant Fir-

man the next day; said there was some strange mistake, and that the whole country would be up in arms against the coast-guards for suspecting a respectable man such as he.

"We only do our duty, sir," they said, and having no orders to remain, withdrew.

Solomon scarcely knew before how wroth he could feel. He paced the apartment, fuming, fretting, exclaiming at the iniquity of Dangerfield or his bailiff, wondering if Mark were concerned in the affair, wishing the wedding at the Antipodes, and acting very differently from his customary precise ways. He, a respectable, well-to-do, pious man to be accused of smuggling! To have a waggon-load of spirits on its way to his reputable homestead! It was incredible, unheard of! But no one would believe it. Yet, uneasy conscience whispered that, if he had never been engaged in actual smuggling,

he had yet frequently found a keg or so of best spirits secreted here and there in or near his house, for which he had duly paid, avoiding duty. So had most of the farmers, tradesmen, gentlemen, magistrates even, it was rumoured, and had never been found out. Why should he and his men be scapegoats for the neighbourhood? Would nobody answer this question? Mark might know. Mark! Where was Mark?

Like Jerusha, Solomon had no sleep that night; but while his guest, Mr. Gay, slumbered peacefully, he wandered about in a vain search for that guest's son.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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